Multilingualism, linguistic ownership and ethnic identity: Attitudes to, and use of, Mauritian

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Declaration

I, Aaliya Rajah-Carrim, declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signature:

Date: 30th October 2004

And Among His Signs are the Creation of the Heavens and the Earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours; verily in those are signs for those who know.

The Quran, Chapter 30, Verse 22

To my Mami and Papi

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Abbreviations & translation

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout the dissertation when describing informants' background:

Ethnicity:

IMH	Indo-Mauritian Hindus
IMM	Indo-Mauritian Muslims
AF	Afro-Mauritians/Creoles
FM	Franco-Mauritians
CP	Coloured Population

Age:

<13	Less than 13
13-19	Aged between 13 and 19 (inclusive)
20-39	Aged between 20 and 39 (inclusive)
40-59	Aged between 40-and 59 (inclusive)
>59	Aged 60 or above

Interviewees' names are followed by their age-group and their ethnicity. For example, Rehaz (20-39, IMM) shows that respondent Rehaz is aged between 20 and 39 years and belongs to the Indo-Mauritian Muslim group.

Translation

Interviewees' responses are quoted in their original form and given in italics. Responses in Mauritian and French are accompanied by a gloss in regular font.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This dissertation analyses the role of ideologies about Mauritian in influencing macro-level and micro-level linguistic practices in Mauritian society. In multiethnic and multilingual Mauritius, language is an important index of ethnicity which in turn is an index of socio-economic status and political power. The situation of the native language of most Mauritians, Mauritian, is particularly interesting from a sociolinguistic perspective in that it is currently being re-evaluated. Because Mauritian is used in a multilingual setting, it competes with other languages, including the prestigious colonial languages, English and French, and highly valued ethnic languages like Hindi and Mandarin. Therefore, ideologies about Mauritian are inextricably linked to ideologies about other languages present on the island as well. Mauritian is in an ambiguous situation: it is simultaneously the most spoken language by all ethnic and religious groups in the country and the language of the Creole ethnic group. Through its index as the language of this socio-economically deprived ethnic group, Mauritian also becomes an index of lower social status. Its link with Creole identity, low prestige and perceived linguistic inferiority vis-à-vis other languages often leads to negative perceptions of the language. However, there is increasing pressure on the government to create an official standard for Mauritian, to introduce the language in the education system and to elevate it to the status of national language. In devising a linguistic policy, the government should consider users' language ideologies. This dissertation aims to shed more light on users' attitudes to Mauritian in two specific domains: writing and education. Through the triangulation of such methods as interviews, perceptual dialectology questionnaires and participant observation, I explain some of the local language ideologies and also provide a comprehensive view of the linguistic situation in Mauritius.

This study shows that attitudes towards Mauritian in the written domain and in the education sector vary significantly. For some Mauritians, Mauritian remains an oral language. Those who do write Mauritian adopt a number of spelling systems. I show how the choice of an orthographic system reflects linguistic and social hierarchies and consequently, is not ideologically neutral. Also, the (perceived) lack of standard for Mauritian is an obstacle to its promotion in the school system. Generally, the non-standard and broken nature of Mauritian, its limited use outside Mauritius and its perceived role as an index of Creole identity are seen as obstacles to its promotion in the written domain and education sector; while its importance as a mother-tongue and its function as a tool of national unity and index of national identity support its use in the written domain and its inclusion in schools. Intimately related to attitudes to Mauritian are perceptions of linguistic purity and ownership which are, in turn, closely linked to ideologies about ethnic identity on the island. A discussion of the purity and ownership of Mauritian further highlights the paradoxical situation which the language finds itself in. While some individuals and groups stress the ethnic nature of Mauritian, others emphasise its national character. Mauritian is clearly embedded with double indexicalities: on the one hand, it is an index of Creole ethnicity and on the other, an index of Mauritian national identity. This leads to different groups fighting over the ownership of the language. This dissertation shows how the question of linguistic ownership is fraught with issues of identity, minority rights and access to power. Because of the nature of the questions addressed, this study has practical social implications for the standardisation of Mauritian, its use in the education system and its promotion at national level – issues that are of immediate interest to Mauritian society generally, and Mauritian language planners specifically.

Chapter One

Introduction

Na pa tous lang ek relizion

Do not interfere with languages and religions

(Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, first Prime Minister of Mauritius)

1.0 The beginning

I am one of those who believe that linguistic diversity is a blessing to mankind. And I am one of those who believe that through the study of languages in their social contexts, we can gain a better understanding of society.

My beliefs and interests tie in well with the field of sociolinguistics which studies "the relationship between language and society" (Holmes 1992:1). I am especially interested in the relationship between language and creole-speaking Mauritian society.

1.1 Why Mauritius?

The multiethnic and multilingual nature of postcolonial Mauritius is striking and is used to promote *la nation arc-en-ciel* ("the rainbow nation" as commonly called in tourist brochures) as a tourist destination. What is especially interesting to a sociolinguist working in Mauritius is the diversity of languages, the complex relationship existing between them and the important link between linguistic behaviour and ideologies of identity.

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The linguistic situation of Mauritius is paradoxical in a number of ways. The most commonly spoken language, Mauritian[1], has no official recognition, while English, the official language, is hardly spoken. European languages exist alongside Asian languages. All the languages present on the island, with the exception of Mauritian, have been brought by immigrants. Many of these languages are not actively used, but they have such important symbolic and institutional value that they are unlikely to disappear from the national linguistic landscape. This is so because in the census and for other official matters, Mauritian society is arranged in terms of ethnolinguistic groups who compete over limited resources. Linguistic issues in Mauritius, therefore, are charged with political, cultural and economic meaning.

Furthermore, the national language situation is delicate, as suggested by the quote at the beginning of this chapter. Even today, this warning of the first Prime Minister is sometimes quoted in debates on languages. Any *faux-pas* as far as language policies are concerned can have serious cultural and political consequences. In 1982 and 1995, issues related to language planning led to political-party breakdowns and precipitated national elections (Miles 2000). That is why languages are ranked on a par with religions in Mauritius. Both are considered sacred domains which should not be tampered with.

The warning of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam has been adhered to by many politicians. However, the 21st century has seen a change in attitudes among the ruling parties. With pressures from members of the general public and linguists, the linguistic issue is now being officially examined. The exact status of Mauritian and

the role of Asian languages are being assessed. Mauritius therefore offers the researcher a dynamic field of research.

Given the vitality of Mauritian society and the powerful language ideologies at work locally, there are a number of local linguistic issues that could be examined. However, in this dissertation, I will focus on the issues that, as a Mauritian, I feel are most pertinent to the country.

1.2 Research issues

The dissertation analyses the role of ideologies of Mauritian in influencing macro-level and micro-level linguistic practices in Mauritian society. The notion *language ideologies* has been defined in various ways in the literature (Woolard 1998). While some definitions analyse the concept broadly in terms of its relationship to "the nature of language in the world" (Rumsey 1990: 346, as quoted in Woolard 1998), others focus on its cultural or socio-political nature (e.g., Irvine 1998, Bokhorst-Heng 1999). In this work, language ideologies are understood as:

> sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use.
>
> (Silverstein 1979: 193)

These "beliefs" are firmly ingrained in users' mind and their validity is not questioned. In fact, they

> have formed part of that community's overall set of beliefs and the life-styles that have evolved on the basis of those beliefs for so long that their origins seem to have been obscured or forgotten (...) A language ideology is political inasmuch as it forms part of the total set of social principles by which the community organizes itself institutionally.
>
> (Watts 1999: 68)

Individual patterns of language use and larger societal issues like language policies, language and identity are therefore intimately linked to ideologies of language. In studying ideologies about Mauritian, we also have to consider ideologies about the other languages present on the island. The various language ideologies are interrelated and serve to complement each other, as will be shown in this dissertation.

Language ideologies entail the existence of indexical relations – at both individual and societal levels. As Silverstein (1998: 130) puts it, "[that] people have ideologies of language, therefore, is a necessary entailment of the fact that language, like any social semiotic, is indexical in its most essential modality". Through indexicality, "cultural contexts such as social identities (e.g. gender) and social activities (e.g. a gossip session) are constituted by particular stances and acts" (Duranti & Goodwin 1992: 335). The notion of indexicality underlines the interdependence of social identities and language. Various societies construct different local indexical models (e.g., Irvine's (1998) discussion of honorific language in the Javanese, Wolof, Zulu and ChiBemba speech communities). While some of the indexical relations are constantly reproduced, others can be contested leading to the establishment of new indexes. In the multiethnic Mauritian context, it is argued that all languages, with the exception of English, are ethnically charged (Stein 1982, Eriksen 1998, Miles 2000). Languages on the island, therefore, have become indexes of ethnic identities (e.g., Eisenlohr 2004). Using this central indexical link as background, I investigate some of the language ideologies in force in Mauritian society.

Language ideologies are manifested in daily routines through language use and attitudes. Therefore, a study of use of, and attitudes to, Mauritian would shed light on

prevailing ideologies about the language. *Attitude*, in this work, is understood as "a disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event" (Ajzen 1988: 4). Language and the stereotypes that the language evokes are "objects" to which responses can be favourable or unfavourable. Given that the uses that people put a language to reflect the attitudes towards that language (e.g., Kulick 1992, Baker 1995, Beckford-Wassink 1999), the choice of Mauritian in any given context can be ideologically charged. In order to understand some of the language ideologies prevalent in Mauritian society, I focus on attitudes to Mauritian in two important domains that are currently undergoing major changes: writing/standardisation and education.

Standardisation is crucial in enhancing the status of a language (Hudson 1996). The standardisation of a language can lead to an extension in the domains of use of the variety, a change in attitudes towards it and the emergence of new language ideologies. Lately, the standardisation of Mauritian has been thrown into the forefront (Ah Nee 2004, Rughoonundun-Chellapermal 2004). Mauritian has not officially been standardised yet[2], but there are currently two non-official standards being promoted. The first standard is the one promoted by the group *Ledikasyon Pu Travayer*. This group supports literacy in Mauritian and runs classes for people of lower social classes. The other standard is the one used by the Church. This standard, known as *grafi linite* (the "orthography of unity") or *grafi legliz* (the "orthography of the Church"), was devised by the Church and the locally well-known linguist, Dev Virahsawmy. However, like other creoles – e.g., Tok Pisin (Mühlhäusler 1995) and Sranan (Sebba 2000) – Mauritian is mostly seen as an oral language with no set orthography (Foley 1992). If Mauritians do have to write Mauritian, they use a

variety of spelling systems (Chapter 4). It has been suggested that the choice of a given orthography reflects language beliefs (Fishman 1972b). Indeed, "[social] and ideological issues always accompany the development of an orthography" (Sebba 2000: 925). More specifically, the way creoles are standardised can reflect the bias towards these languages which are seen as inferior to, and dependent on, their lexifiers (Alleyne 1994, Mühlhäusler 1995, Schieffelin & Doucet 1998). Therefore, the assessment of who writes Mauritian and how they write it will enable us to further investigate local language ideologies.

Closely related to the issue of standardisation is the place of Mauritian in the education system. At present, Mauritian has no place – either as a medium of instruction or as a subject – in the curriculum. This is not surprising given that the language has no official recognition and has not been officially standardised. But recently, there has been pressure on the government to introduce Mauritian in the school system (e.g., Ah Nee 2003, Virahsawmy 2003, De L'Estrac 2004). In a newspaper interview in February 2004, the Minister of Education, Steve Obeegadoo, states that Mauritian will be officially introduced in primary schools in the coming years (*Impact News*, 22 February 2004). Attitudes within the wider speech community to the use of Mauritian in the education system vary significantly (Chapter 5). On the one hand, the non-standard and broken nature of Mauritian, its limited use outside Mauritius and its perceived role as an index of Creole identity are seen as obstacles to its promotion in the education sector. On the other, its importance as a mother-tongue and its function as a tool of national unity and index of national identity support its inclusion in schools. The ongoing debate about the introduction of Mauritian in the education system has highlighted all these issues

which are inextricably linked to ideologies about language – not only ideologies about Mauritian but also ideologies about other languages.

There are a number of issues that crop up when discussing attitudes to written Mauritian and Mauritian in the education system; two important ones being *language purity* and *language ownership*. In the Mauritian context, language purity and ownership are closely linked to the "purity and integrity" (Eisenlohr 2004: 66) of ethnic groups on the island. Perceptions of language purity are seen to reflect attitudes to the various groups of speakers of the language (Preston 1993). Discussions of language purity and authenticity therefore tie in well with studies on language attitudes. The issue of language purity takes on a special significance in the case of a language like Mauritian which has yet to be officially standardised (Chapter 4). Furthermore, in the Mauritian context, it appears that purity of Mauritian and ownership of the language are interrelated. Indeed, there exist indexical relations between purity and ownership in the speech community. By discussing perceptions of, and attitudes to, the speakers of the purest forms of Mauritian, we can address some of the competing ideologies regarding ownership of Mauritian. We work with the assumption that there is a link between speakers of the purest forms of the language and its owners (Chapter 6).

With no official recognition, Mauritian, the most widely spoken language on the island, has no clearly defined function and it can be appropriated by various segments of the population as a marker of their identity. It has been argued that as a postcolonial nation, Mauritius needs symbols of national identity and unity (Eriksen 1994). Mauritian is thought to be an ideal national symbol in that it is known by all

Mauritians. Although Mauritian is widely used across the island and by people of all social and religious groups, it is sometimes associated with a specific ethnicity, the Creoles who are the descendants of the slaves. Through its index as language of this socio-economically deprived ethnic group, Mauritian also becomes an index of lower social status. Like all languages on the island, therefore, Mauritian has acquired an indexical link to ethnicity – Creole ethnicity in this case. It could therefore be said that Mauritian has dual indexicality: as a "national" language and as an "ethnic" language. By examining the degree of social acceptance of Mauritian in the written domain and the education sector, we assess whether Mauritians feel that Mauritian is transcending ethnic and social barriers and moving to a situation where it can be used as an official national language in the 21st century. If, indeed, attitudes towards Mauritian are changing, it could be claimed that the language is acquiring a new national dimension in addition to its role as a marker of Creole ethnicity, i.e., slave ancestry. We discuss this interplay between language ideologies and construction of ethnic and national identities in the postcolonial Mauritian context.

1.3 The larger context

Given the aims discussed above, this dissertation can be placed within the larger discourse in sociolinguistics on language in the community (e.g., Carranza 1982, Fasold 1984, Priestley 1994, Adegbija 2000, Canagarajah 2000, Bilaniuk 2003). A growing body of sociolinguistic research follows anthropology in examining the role of language ideologies in the construction of identity (e.g., Blommaert 1999, Irvine & Gal 2000, Kroskrity 2000, Milroy 2001, Pomerantz 2002, Sweetland 2002, Echeverria 2003). This dissertation draws on previous sociolinguistic research in order to expose the complexities of language in the construction of an ethnic identity

in an additional speech community. It contributes to our understanding of local language behaviours and ideologies in a postcolonial and multiethnic setting.

Moreover, creole-speaking communities have become the focus of a number of sociolinguistic studies. Attitudes to creoles have been widely discussed in the literature. Creole languages have generally been stigmatised and perceived as broken varieties of their European lexifier languages (e.g., Holmes 1992, Romaine 1994, Sebba 1997). However, Rickford (1983) argues that attitudes towards creoles are more nuanced and cannot be straightforwardly described. In Seychelles (Bollée 1993), for instance, the creole language, Seselwa, is valued for its role as a marker of a new postcolonial identity. There have been some investigations analysing attitudes to, and use of, languages in Mauritius. For instance, Domingue (1981), Rao & Sharma (1988) and Eisenlohr (2004) have contributed to our understanding of the use and importance of Indian languages on the island. Baggioni & Robillard (1990) and Robillard (1992) discuss the situation of French on the island and underline its role as a prestigious socio-economic language. There have also been a number of discussions on the general linguistic situation of Mauritius, e.g., Moorghen & Domingue (1982), Stein (1982) and Bissoonauth & Offord (2001). Foley (1992) focuses specifically on the sociolinguistic situation of Mauritian and suggests that it will gain further importance in the years to come. However, research on the sociolinguistic situation of Mauritius, especially the situation of Mauritian, is still fairly limited. By providing some insight into local linguistic practices, this dissertation seeks to make a contribution to the limited literature on the sociolinguistics of another creole-speaking community.

The nature of the issues addressed in this dissertation leads me to touch on the important issue of nationhood in a postcolonial country. Western notions of nationhood suggest that the citizens of a nation have a common history and culture (Gellner 1983, Giddens 1991, Handler & Segal 1992), and by implication, a shared language. This dissertation extends the Western definition of nationalism so that the term can account for nations with citizens having a different past and culture but possibly sharing a common language. It looks at the way in which ethnic and national identities interact and citizens forge a national identity based on ideologies about a common language (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985). Although the observations will hold specifically for Mauritius, it might be possible to relate the findings to other creole or multilingual speech communities.

Finally, as mentioned in section 1.2 above, the linguistic situation of Mauritius is currently undergoing major changes. By discussing language use and attitudes in two dynamic domains, this study addresses issues that are of immediate interest to Mauritian society generally, and Mauritian language planners specifically. Because of the questions it deals with, this dissertation has practical social implications for the standardisation of Mauritian, its use in the education system and its promotion at official level. As such, this dissertation ties in well with other research "in the sociolinguistics of language [which] has always been accompanied by a strong emphasis on applications of the results to social problems" (Fasold 1990: 269).

1.4 Conclusion

The issues raised above shape the approach adopted and the questions put forward in the rest of this dissertation. In the next chapter, through a description of the socio-

historical and linguistic situation of Mauritius, I place the research issues in their cultural context.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the data-collection methods for this study. I have used a number of established methods for the study of language attitudes and use, including interviews, participant observation and perceptual dialectology questionnaires.

Chapters 4 and 5 analyse use of, and attitudes to, written Mauritian and use of Mauritian in the education system, respectively. By focusing on these two dynamic domains, I explore some of the language ideologies at work in Mauritian society.

These two chapters lead to the discussion on linguistic purity in Chapter 6 and language ownership in Chapter 7. Chapter 6 highlights the indexical values of Mauritian and its position as a direct index of Creole ethnicity. In Chapter 7, I discuss the value of Mauritian as an ethnic and a national language. The main aim of Chapter 7 is to identify who (if anyone) might be said to be the owner of Mauritian.

Chapter 8, the final chapter of this dissertation, acts as a conclusion to the study and suggests some directions for further research.

Chapter Two

Mauritius and Its People

2.0 Introduction

We have seen in the preceding chapter that sociolinguistics is the study of the "relationship between language and society" (Holmes 1992:1). Consequently, it is vital to have an understanding of the society whose language/s is/are being studied. In this chapter, I discuss some features of Mauritian society. The material here lays the foundation for the other chapters in this dissertation. In the first part of this chapter, I describe the geographical situation of the island. I then go on to discuss the history, demography, socio-economic situation, education system and media of Mauritius. In the following two sections, I describe the linguistic situation of the island and discuss the concept of creolisation. The chapter ends with a summary and conclusion.

2.1 Geographical and physical setting

The island of Mauritius is situated in the Indian Ocean at a latitude of 20° south and a longitude of 57° east, some 800 kilometres east of Madagascar. Mauritius, together with Reunion and Rodrigues islands, is part of the Mascarene Archipelagos. The country of Mauritius consists of the islands of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Saint Brandon and Agalega, with the first two being the most populous ones.
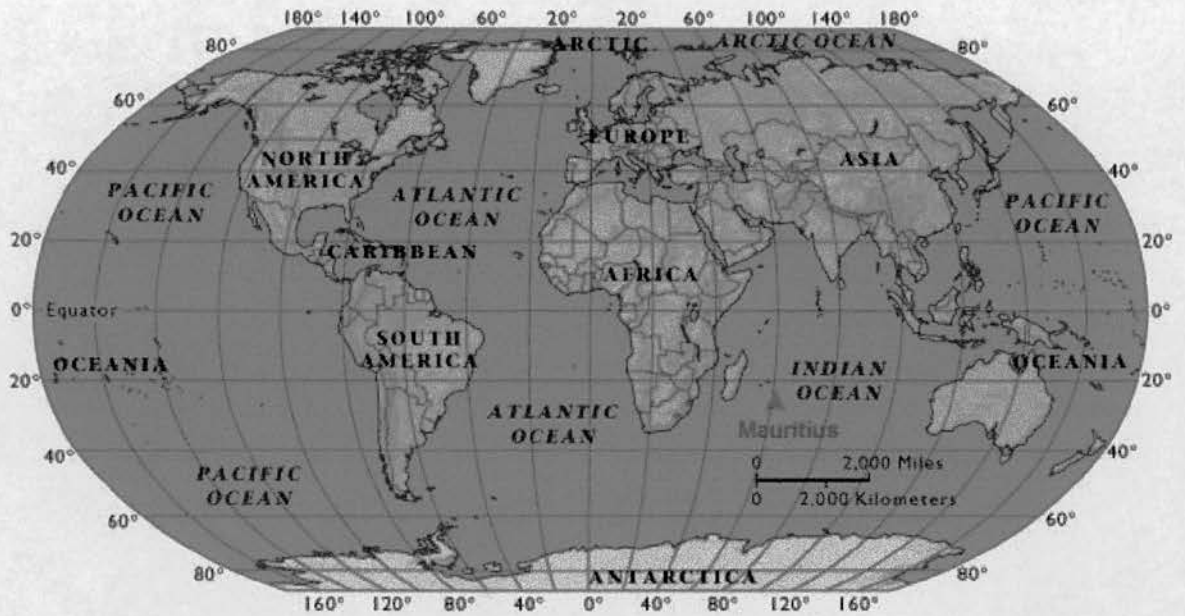
Map 2.1. World map showing the location of Mauritius.

(Source:
http://images.google.co.uk/imgres?imgurl=http://bii.intnet.mu/images/map.jpg&imgrefurl=http://bii.in
tnet.mu/map.html&h=334&w=611&sz=71&tbnid=DMtq9QHpViEJ:&tbnh=72&tbnw=131&start=24
4&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dmap%2Bof%2Bmauritius%26start%3D240%26hl%3Den%26lr%3D%26s
a%3DN. Accessed on 15th March 2004)
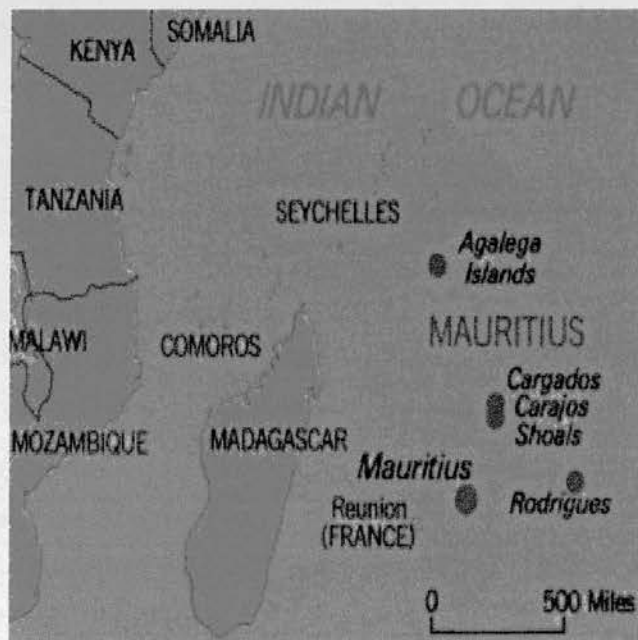
Map 2.2. Mauritius and some of the surrounding islands.

(Source: http://www.eng.uct.ac.za/~chnste010/photo/map1.jpg. Accessed on 15th March 2004).

The island of Mauritius (henceforth referred to as Mauritius), of volcanic origin, has a surface area of 1864 km². It consists of a city, Port-Louis; six towns, Beau-Bassin, Rose-Hill, Quatre-Bornes, Vacoas, Phoenix and Curepipe; and various villages. For administrative purposes, the country is divided into 9 districts.

Map 2.3. Map of Mauritius showing the nine districts and important towns and villages.

(Source: http://www.phonebookoftheworld.com/mauritius/mapofMauritius.jpg. Accessed on 10th March 2004)

2.2 History

The present linguistic, cultural and demographic situation of Mauritius has to be analysed with respect to the island's history. There is no record of any indigenous population on Mauritius at the time of its first discovery in the 12th century by Swahili seamen (Toussaint 1972).

In the 16th century, the Portuguese landed on the island and named it *Ilha do Cirne*. The Portuguese explored the surrounding islands and named the three islands Rodrigues, Reunion and Mauritius as *Mascarenes* after the Portuguese navigator, Pedro Mascarenhas. Rodrigues island was named after its discoverer, Diego Rodriguez. Like the Swahili seamen, the Portuguese did not settle on *Ilha do Cirne* which was only used as a port of call.

The first settlement took place in the 17th century with the arrival of the Dutch. The Dutch first landed on the uninhabited *Ilha do Cirne* in 1598, but it was only in 1638 that they actually settled on the island. They named the island *Mauritius* in honour of Prince Maurice of Nassau. At the time of the arrival of the Dutch, the flora and fauna of Mauritius was plentiful. Ebony, a valuable wood, could be found on the island. The Dutch brought slaves from Madagascar to cut down the ebony. They introduced sugar cane from Java. The cultivation of cotton and tobacco and the rearing of cattle and deer were also established during the Dutch settlement. By the 1650s, the Dutch controlled Cape of Good Hope and their interest in Mauritius dwindled. In 1658, they decided to leave the island. However, in 1664, the Dutch attempted another settlement on the island. But, the settlers could not cope with the difficult weather

conditions and the rats (which they are believed to have introduced themselves). In 1710, they abandoned Mauritius for good, leaving a few runaway slaves behind and a damaged flora and fauna. It was during the Dutch settlement that the Dodo became extinct. The Dutch settlement has not had any significant effect on island. The names of some places of the island act as a testimony to Dutch presence, e.g., *Plaines Wilhems, Flacq, Pieter Both Mountain*.

When the Dutch abandoned the island, the French *Compagnie des Indes* who occupied the neighbouring Reunion Island (then known as *Ile Bourbon*) decided to take possession of Mauritius. The island's strategic position made it a desirable asset to colonisers on the spice route. In 1715, the French took possession of the island and named it *Ile de France*. But it was only in 1721 that the first French settlers with their slaves, brought from Mozambique, Madagascar and India, arrived. With the arrival of the French and the slaves from different continents, the linguistic and cultural mosaic of Mauritius began to take form. During the French era, economic and cultural development was fostered. The cultivation of cotton, indigo and most importantly, sugar were reintroduced. More slaves were brought to the island. *Ile de France* was a prosperous country.

French and Mauritian were used at that time (Baker & Corne 1986). In the late 18th century, there also came some craftsmen and traders from India. These were free people. The craftsmen were mainly from Pondicherry and were brought to build Port-Louis, the capital city. Those Indian craftsmen are said to have merged into the Coloured Population – a group that consisted of free people. As for the traders, they

came mainly from Gujerat and managed to keep their traditions, religion and language. So, there were a number of languages spoken during the French period.

During the French era, the slaves who were too old to engage in work were set free. A woman slave who bore the child of her master could be set free as well. Her child would generally be considered as a free Coloured Person or a "Mulatto"[3]. The Coloured Population/Mulattos formed a distinct ethnic group (Eriksen 1998). Although they had fairer complexions than the African slaves and could speak French, they were not considered as part of the Franco-Mauritian group.

Because of its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, *Ile de France* was a prized possession coveted by the British. In 1810, the British captured the island and renamed it *Mauritius*. English replaced French as the language of administration and education. However, French was still widely used across the island. The few British families who settled in Mauritius acquired the French language (Beaton 1859, Stein 1997). English, therefore, has never been as widely used as French on the island. Mauritian was still used during the British period. With the abolition of slavery in 1835, new labourers had to be found to work on the plantation estates in Mauritius. Labourers were brought from India and came to be known as *indentured labourers*, *Biharis* or *coolies*. Most of the labourers were from Bihar – hence the term Biharis to refer to them – Bengal and what is today Bangladesh and they spoke different languages, namely Bhojpuri, Tamil and Telugu. Bhojpuri was the most common language (Stein 1982). The coolies were Hindus or Muslims. These Indian populations either merged into the free Coloured Population or formed a distinct

group with their own Indian cultural identity (Carter 1995: 18). The latter group managed to maintain their traditional family structures, customs, languages and religions. In 1909, at the end of the indenture system, the population consisted of 450,000 people of Indian origin.

In the 1830s, more traders came from Gujerat. Unlike the indentured labourers, these traders were not bound by any contract (Benedict 1965). These merchants were mostly Muslims and were referred to either as Surtees (if they came from Surat) or Memans (if they came from Kutch). The Surtees spoke Gujerati while the Memans used Kutchi, a dialect of Gujerati.

Non-Indian immigrants included Chinese. The Chinese came from the South of China as free persons and established themselves in retailing in the 19th and 20th centuries. Most of them spoke Hakka, a few spoke Cantonese (Stein 1982, Eriksen 1999).

By the middle of the 20th century, immigration became relatively rare in Mauritius. The composition of the population has not changed significantly since then. On the 12th March 1968, Mauritius acquired independence. Twenty-four years later, on the 12th March 1992, the country acceded to the status of Republic.

2.3 Demographic situation

The 2000 Population Census indicates that there are 1,143,069 people living in Mauritius (Central Statistical Office 2000). The resident population for 2002 was estimated at 1,210,200 while the projected population for 2007 is 1,265,500 (Central Statistical Office 2002). There are slightly more women than men on the island: 50.48% compared to 49.52%. The greatest proportion of the population is aged between 15 and 59 with the median age being 29.5 years. The population density is 596 inhabitants per square kilometre.

The Mauritian population is usually divided along ethnic lines, where ethnicity is associated with "family origins, language, religion, physical appearance (phenotype) and/or lifestyle" (Eriksen 1998: 49). For official purposes, the population of Mauritius is divided into the following four ethnic and/or religious groups: *Hindus, Muslims, General Population* and *Sino-Mauritians*. Together the Hindus and Muslims make up the Indo-Mauritian group. While the terms *Hindus* and *Muslims* refer to religious groups, the term *Indo-Mauritians* refers to a racial group. This Indo-Mauritian group makes up the largest segment of the population.

There is a discrepancy between official and actual categorisations. The way in which identity is constructed in everyday life in Mauritius is more complex than suggested by the official records. In real life, the official Hindu group (52%) is divided into Hindus (40%) and also Tamils (7%), Telugus (3%) and Marathis (2%). The Hindu/Tamil/Telugu/Marathi distinction is made on the basis of religious affiliations and ancestral languages (Eriksen 1998). Even though the religious practices and cultural traditions of each of these Hindu groups seem similar, there are some

significant religious and cultural differences among the groups. Therefore, the Tamils, Telugus, Marathis and Hindus are, in fact, separate ethnic groups. The official category *Hindu* is an umbrella-term for various other minority religious and linguistic groups. In this dissertation, the term (*Indo-Mauritian*) *Hindu* will be used to refer to the various ethnic groups within the official *Hindu* group, unless otherwise stated. If we do break down the interviewees in this study into the various *Hindu* subgroups, then we will be generalising from three to four people only.

The Indo-Mauritian Muslim group, who make up 17% of the total Mauritian population, can also be further divided into smaller ethnic groups. However, the differences among these Muslim groups are minor and are only cultural and not religious in nature. The Muslim community consists of *Calcattias*, *Surtees* and *Memans* (Hollup 1996). The Calcattias are descendants of the Bhojpuri-speaking Muslim indentured labourers and form the largest group within the Muslim community. The ancestors of the Surtees and Memans came as free merchants from the Indian state of Gujerat and spoke Gujerati and Kutchi, respectively. Kutchi is considered a dialect of Gujerati (Stein 1982). The Memans form the smallest group among the Muslim community.

As for the *General Population*, they regroup *Afro-Mauritians*, *Coloured People/Mulattos* and *Franco-Mauritians*. In fact, the term *General Population* is a cover-term, not often used in daily interactions. The Afro-Mauritians are generally referred to as *Creoles*, where creole is usually characterised by a person's skin colour, physical features and also use of Mauritian. The Creoles make up the largest section of the General Population (28%) (Eriksen 1999). The ethnic category *Creole*

can also be assigned to the Mulattos who have dark skin. Some of the Mulattos aspire to the French culture and way of life and do not want to be considered as Afro-Mauritians. Nonetheless, they are still generally rejected by the Franco-Mauritians. Indo-Mauritians of the Christian faith are also considered as *Coloured People*. In the 1983 census, 18,000 Mauritians of Indian origin stated being Christians (Moutou 1996: 159). These Indo-Mauritians converted from Hinduism to Christianity at the time of colonisation. As for the Franco-Mauritians, they form a distinct cultural and social group within the General Population. Because of their fair complexion and consistent use of French, they are never referred to as "Creoles". They make up only 2% of the total population but are a socio-economically powerful minority within the nation (Moutou 1996).

Most, if not all, Creoles, Coloured People and Franco-Mauritians are Christians. Thus, the term *General Population* could be considered a religious categorisation in that it only regroups Mauritians of the Christian faith. However, it is not the only category that regroups Christians. A large proportion of the official category *Sino-Mauritian* are also Christians. The category *Sino-Mauritian* (2% of the total Mauritian population) refers to an ethnic, rather than a religious, group. It regroups the descendants of those Chinese who came to Mauritius as free workers. Through Christianisation missions, many of the Buddhist Sino-Mauritians have converted to Christianity. Presently, an important number of Sino-Mauritians are Christians (Moutou 1996). In the 2000 Population Census, only 0.36% of the total Mauritian population claim to be Buddhists. Although physically the Sino-Mauritians differ significantly from the other ethnic groups of the island; religiously, they have

assimilated to the General Population group. Indeed, it has been suggested that they have completely assimilated into the Mauritian lifestyle and have adopted Mauritian primarily as their language (Stein 1986, Eriksen 1998).

So, in some cases, ethnic identity coincides with religious identity. As mentioned above, most Hindus and Muslims are of Indian ethnicity. It is very unlikely to find a Franco-Mauritian or an Afro-Mauritian Hindu. Unlike the Hindu and Muslim communities, the Christian community forms an ethnically heterogeneous group. In fact, it comprises members from all the ethnic groups of the island – i.e., Afro-, Franco-, Indo- and Sino-Mauritians and also members of the Coloured Population. Figure 2.1 below shows the various ethnic and religious groups that make up the Mauritian Population.
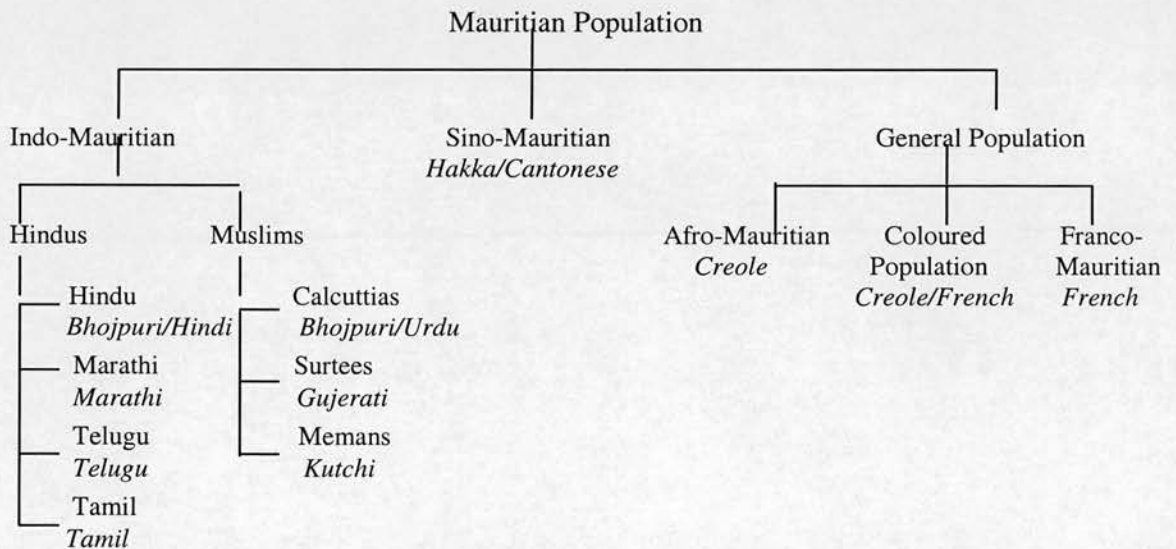
Figure 2.1. Ethnic and religious groups and their linguistic affiliations[4] (Rajah-Carrim 2003: 66)

It should be noted that Mauritians tend to be devoted to their religion. In the 2000 Population Census, only 0.42% of the total population claim to have no religion. The three main religious factions quoted in the 2000 Census are Hinduism (including the

minority groups Tamils, Telugus and Marathis), Christianity (mostly of the Roman Catholic denomination) and Islam (consisting mostly of Sunni Muslims). Each of the main religious factions can be divided into smaller groups, on the basis of differences in religious practices. For instance, the Hindu group can be divided into *Arya Samajist*, *Sanatanist, Vedic* while the Muslim group can be divided into *Sunni Muslim* and *Shia Muslim*. Other religious groups include Buddhism, Bahai and other minority groups, commonly referred as to *mission*, such as *Jehovah's Witness, Mission Salut et Guérison* and *Assembly of God*.

Ethnicity and religion are two important criteria in the division of the Mauritian population. Intra-faith and intra-ethnic marriages still appear to be the norm within the Mauritian community. These marriages ensure the maintenance of ethnic and religious boundaries on the island. Other factors such as socio-economic status, level of education, place of residence and languages, can also be decisive factors in regrouping the population. In the section below, we briefly discuss the socio-economic situation of Mauritius. We then move on to describe the education system and linguistic situation of the island.

2.4 Socio-economic situation

By Western standards, Mauritius is still a developing nation. For 2001/2002, the average monthly income and expenditure were Rs 14, 208 (approximately £ 300) and Rs 10,129 (approximately £ 215), respectively. The economic profile of Mauritius has changed significantly since the 1970s. Before the advent of the secondary sector *Export Processing* Zone (EPZ) in the 1970s, sugar-producing Mauritius was largely

a monocrop economy. Nowadays, Mauritius exports many other agricultural and textile products to Europe, along with its sugar. For 2002, unemployment was of 9.8%: 8.5% for men and 12.2% for women (Central Statistical Office 2002). The service sector employs the largest section of the population. The labour force in Mauritius is male-dominated: 66% of the labour force are men and 34% are women.

There are no exact definitions of social class in Mauritian society. However such factors as occupation, income, place of residence and level of education, can help to assess a person's social class. In the 2000 Census, the population was divided into the following "major occupational groups":

1.   legislators, senior officials and managers;

2.   professionals;

3.   technicians and associate professionals;

4.   clerks;

5.   service workers and shop sales workers;

6.   skilled agricultural and fishery workers;

7.   craft and related trades workers;

8.   plant and machine operators and assemblers; and

9.   elementary occupations.

Occupation is directly influenced by level of education. Thus, people with tertiary education are more likely to be in groups 1, 2 and 3, those with secondary-level education in groups 4, 5 and possibly 8; those with vocational training in groups 6, 7 and again, possibly 8 (depending on the exact nature of the occupation). Mauritians

with only primary-level education, i.e., minimal academic education, are likely to have "elementary occupations".

Thus, people with basic unskilled jobs make up the lowest section of society. They could be categorised as the lower working-class group. The plant and machine operators and assemblers could be either classed as upper working-class or lower middle-class, depending on the level of education needed for the job and also, the salary range. The lower middle-class group could also include craft and related trades workers, skilled agricultural and fishery workers, service workers and shop sales workers. Again, depending on the salary scale and the level of education attained by the workers in question, the craft and related trades workers and skilled agricultural and fishery workers could fit into the middle middle-class. Among the middle middle-class, we also find clerks, technicians and associate professionals. Professionals, senior officials, managers and legislators are part of the upper middle-class. More experienced professionals and managers of big enterprises could be considered as part of the upper class. It is clear that the division along classes is not a completely scientific exercise and boundaries between the classes are fuzzy.

Furthermore, in Mauritius, it is generally thought that social class coincides with place of residence. For instance, middle-class Mauritians usually live in towns and "town-like" villages, i.e., villages which offer the same facilities as towns but are not officially recognised as such. Lower classes usually stay in villages or suburbs of towns, i.e., places where accommodation is cheapest. The State has built many housing estates for the lowest classes in the suburbs of towns. These estates, known

as *cités*, consist of flats which are either rented or sold at low prices to this group (Chapter 6). As for the upper classes, they are usually found in remote places. The rich Franco-Mauritians, for instance, are stereotypically associated with such remote regions as Black River, Moka and/or Floréal. Therefore, all the criteria listed above taken together can help assign Mauritians to specific social classes. Interestingly, in the Mauritian context, ethnicity can also provide an indication of social class, as shown below.

Each ethnic group is stereotypically assigned an/a few occupation(s). These stereotypes of occupations "are largely congruent with the actual distribution of power" (Eriksen 1998: 63) and usually match the ethnic group's physical traits, level of education and stereotypical place of residence. For instance, Chinese are usually thought to be money-minded and their main occupation is thought to be trade. Although these views are largely based on stereotypes and prejudices, there is some truth in them. For instance, the first Chinese who came to Mauritius were traders. So, there are historical reasons for associating Chinese with trade. In the same way, Creoles are linked with fishing and other coastal occupations. After the abolition of slavery, the vast majority of slave were reluctant to go back to the cane fields and chose instead to settle along the coast on the island. They turned to fishing as a means of livelihood. Today, Creoles are still stereotypically associated with fishing (Eriksen 1998).

As can be seen, ethnic identity is all-pervasive in Mauritian society. In the occupational domain as well, ethnic stereotypes persist. People's occupation can be

gauged from their ethnicity. Putting this differently, we could say that the ethnic identity of Mauritians acts as an index of their (future) occupations. However, with increasing access to education, the situation is now changing: all ethnic groups are represented in white collar jobs (although some ethnic groups still hold minority status in the public sector, for instance). Education, therefore, creates new opportunities for previously deprived ethnic groups. However, as will be shown below, even in the education sector, level of academic success is associated with ethnic identity.

2.5 Level of education and education system

Government reports suggest that 95% of the Mauritian population are literate. However, in the 2000 Population Census, 14% the population claim to be illiterate, i.e., cannot read or write a simple sentence in any language. The discrepancy between these two official reports is due to a difference in the definition of literacy (Virahsawmy 2002). For Government purposes, literacy is defined as the ability to sign one's name. By this definition, most people will turn out to be literate and hence, the 95% figure comes as no surprise. The definition adopted in the Census which is less broad will be adopted in this dissertation.

According to Virahsawmy (2002), the education system is responsible for the high level of illiteracy in Mauritius. Primary education is compulsory. Children from five to eleven years of age attend primary school. At the end of six or more years in primary school, young Mauritians take national exams and are then admitted to secondary school. For 2003, the pass rate for the Certificate of Primary Education

(CPE) exams was 62.6% – 57% for boys, 69% for girls (*L'Express* 15 December 2003). At the end of 5 years of secondary education, they take the School Certificate (SC) examinations certified by the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate. The success rate at these exams for 2002 was 74.6% (72.3% for boys, 76.6% for girls). Two years after the SC exams, some students take the Higher School Certificate (HSC) examinations, where pass rates are around 75%. After these major exams, some students join tertiary institutions – in Mauritius or abroad – or join the workforce. There is only one university in Mauritius.

Primary and secondary education is free. However, there are now many private schools – either based on the French education system or the English one. These private schools are said to offer a broad-based education to students, rather than just focus on academic subjects. Until 2001, entry in secondary school was based on the student's rank at the CPE exams. There was fierce competition for the places in the best secondary schools, commonly called *star schools*. Since 2002, the ranking has been replaced with a grading system and new secondary schools have been built. This has significantly decreased the competitive aspect of the CPE exams.

In state primary schools, pupils study 5 main subjects: French, English, Mathematics, Science, History & Geography. Many pupils also opt for one of the following *oriental languages*: Arabic, Hindi, Mandarin, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. These languages are offered as an alternative to "religious classes" which are taught to Christian pupils. As could be expected in the Mauritian context, the choice of the oriental language is largely influenced by the ethnicity of the pupil. In other words,

mostly Indo-Mauritian children take the ancestral languages at school, with each ethnic group opting for the language with which they identify. So far, oriental languages and religious classes have not been taken into account for the CPE ranking or grading. However, as from 2004, the oriental languages were to be included in the final grade of the pupil. But, this will not happen in 2004 as according to the Minister of Education, Steve Obeegadoo, "the pedagogical material is not ready" (*le matériel pédagogique n'est pas prêt* – *L'Express* 7 January 2004). The inclusion of oriental languages for the CPE grade turns out to be more than a pedagogical issue. As Chapter 5 points out, Creole and Coloured children, or at least their parents, do not identify with any of these oriental languages. And according to some pro-Creole groups such as *Front Commun* and *Mouvman Bienet Kreol Roche-Bois*, this puts them at an obvious disadvantage with respect to their Indo- and Sino-Mauritian counterparts. The oriental language issue is, therefore, charged with ethnic meaning.

From the first year in primary school till tertiary level, English is the medium of instruction. This means that all subjects, with the obvious exception of languages and literatures, are taught in English from the very beginning of formal education. This language choice has often been held responsible for the important rates of failure at primary school level (Chapter 5). Even though English is the medium of instruction, its use is relatively limited compared to that of French. Indeed, many teachers use French instead of English in the classroom. New concepts are usually explained in French or even, in Mauritian. Although Mauritian has no recognised position in the education system, it is commonly used within the school grounds. School-friends usually converse in Mauritian. The language is also sometimes used in informal

conversations with teachers (Chapter 5). In a typical biology class, for instance, the teacher first explains in French (or even Mauritian), and then possibly dictates notes in English. Students generally ask questions to the teacher in French but in Mauritian to their classmates and answer examination questions in English!

Furthermore, in some secondary schools, Spanish, German and oriental languages are taught as optional subjects. But few students opt for these languages. All students have to study French till at least SC level and English till HSC. Results in English determine students' final results. For students to clear their final HSC exams, they have to obtain at least pass marks in the *General Paper* exams. This paper tests English proficiency and also, "general knowledge". Students with the best performance at HSC level in the *Science, Economics, Technical* and *Arts Sides* are given state scholarships. Because there are many students taking these exams and less than 20 scholarships (all four fields included), competition at this level is very fierce. Even though proficiency in English determines academic success, use of the language is limited to formal domains only. In state schools, the language of the school-grounds is Mauritian (especially in secondary schools) and/or French (especially in primary schools).

As mentioned above, rates of failure are associated with ethnic groups. Thus, Sino-Mauritians are generally considered to be very successful on the academic level. This is based on the fact that a proportionately high number of Sino-Mauritians excel at HSC level. The Creoles are at the other end of the spectrum in that they tend to be associated with academic mediocrity. It is not common to find Creole youngsters at

HSC or even, SC, level. Their lack of academic success has been attributed to the use of English as a medium of instruction and also, the scorn for their language and culture in the school environment (Chapter 5). As for the Indo-Mauritians, they are generally associated with hard work and hence, academic success. It is difficult to place the Franco-Mauritians within this scheme since many, if not most, Franco-Mauritians attend private schools. Consequently, their performance cannot be compared to that of other ethnic groups. But it is clear that in Mauritius, academic performance tends to be linked to ethnic identity and social class. Similar observations apply for the Mauritian media, as shown below.

2.6 Mauritian media

Mauritians have access to a range of newspapers and radio and television channels. The two main daily newspapers are *L'Express* and *Le Mauricien*. There are also several weekly newspapers, the most popular ones being *Le Défi* and *Week-end*. There are some newspapers written in ancestral languages as well. But these are read only by a small segment of the local population.

All the most widely read newspapers largely contain articles in French. For instance, of the 37 main articles in the online edition of *L'Express* of the 19 April 2004, 32 were in French and the rest in English, while all the articles of *Le Mauricien* of the same date were in French. The Mauritian press is therefore mostly francophone. English is largely restricted to letters to the editor and international news. Over the last few years, there has been an increasing use of Mauritian in the written media. One can find a number of advertisements in Mauritian. Also, the debate about the

introduction of Mauritian in the education system has led to a few people writing articles in Mauritian in both *L'Express* and *Le Mauricien*. But generally, in the written media, Mauritian is largely limited to the publicity domain.

The main newspapers are controlled by members of the General Population (Moutou 1996). This could explain the important use of French and minimal use of English and Mauritian in this domain. Although English is the official language of the nation, it is clear that its use in the media is very restricted. Also, given that the orthography of Mauritian has not been properly established yet, it is not surprising that its use in newspapers is limited. And given that Mauritian is still mostly an oral language, we would expect it to be used especially in oral means of mass communication, like radio and television. This is indeed the case.

There are a number of radio channels in Mauritius, most of which are owned by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), a government-controlled organisation. The last 3 years have seen the establishment of some private radio companies, like *Radio One*, *Radio Plus* and *Top FM*. On all radio channels, the main languages used are French and Mauritian. English tends to be restricted to news bulletins. There are also programmes in Bhojpuri, Hindi and Urdu. On MBC channels, a few hours are also devoted to minority ancestral languages like Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Mandarin and Gujerati.

Moreover, there are three public television channels run by the MBC. Mauritians can also have access to the two PayTV channels *Canal+* and *SkyNews*. MBC TV

programmes are broadcast in a number of languages – the main ones being French, Mauritian, Hindustani and English. There are news bulletins in these four languages. Today, Mauritian has an important place on the three public channels. This can be attributed to the endeavours of some Creole groups and individuals who felt that their language was relegated to the background while those of other groups were being promoted. For instance, in June 1997, the group *Organisation Fraternelle* (OF) organised a protest in front of the MBC station to ask for more programmes in Mauritian (*Le Mauricien* 6 June 1997). In 1999, Sylvio Michel, a Creole politician, took the MBC to court for the few hours that it allocates to programmes in Mauritian. Michel argued that in the audiovisual domain, Mauritian should be treated in the same way as other languages. That there were few programmes in Mauritian left him with the impression that "his mother tongue was inferior to others" (*sa langue maternelle était considérée comme inférieure aux autres* (*Le Mauricien* 15 March 1999)). Michel's case exemplifies the interaction between language and perceptions of power – the section below further illustrates this point.

It should be noted that till today, the main news bulletin broadcast at 19:30 is in French. Most evening movies are in French. There are several local programmes like chat shows, discussion forums and TV serials, in Mauritian. Bhojpuri is also used in some discussion forums (Eisenlohr 2004). Overall, therefore, French seems to be the preferred language on TV channels. It is followed by Mauritian and English. Asian languages, with the exception of Bhojpuri and Hindustani, have few hours of broadcasting on the local channels.

Generally, therefore, on radio/television channels and in the written media, French is the language most often used or used at peak times (e.g., news bulletins, morning programmes). French could therefore be called the default language of the media. The frequency of use of Mauritian on radio/TV differs from its use in newspapers. Indeed, Mauritian is widely used on radio and TV channels. This confirms its position as an oral, rather than written, language. However, even on radio and TV channels, its use tends to be restricted to discussion forums, chat shows, entertainment programmes and other "informal" programmes. For instance, although there are news bulletins in Mauritian, these are not broadcast at peak times. The domains of use (e.g., advertisements, entertainment programmes) of Mauritian in the media confirm its situation as the language of informal interactions and the language of solidarity and friendship. In some sense, Mauritian lacks the "seriousness" of French, which is the preferred language for broadcasting news bulletins. We further discuss patterns of language use in the section below and throughout this dissertation.

2.7 Linguistic situation

The linguistic situation of Mauritius will be assessed in the following chapters. In this part, I give a very brief description of the language situation on the island. Mauritius is known as a multilingual nation. Although there are ten or more languages present on the island, few are actively used by the population. The most commonly used languages in spoken and/or written interactions are English, French, Mauritian and Bhojpuri.

English is the official language. According to Robillard (1989), the Constitution of Mauritius does not explicitly confer official status to English. This language is part of the British legacy. At the time of the capture of Mauritius by the British, the language of administration changed from French to English and this situation has remained unchanged ever since that time. Although English is the *de facto* official language, it is not widely used across the island. In fact, in the 2000 Population Census, only 0.3% of the total population claim that English is the "language usually or most often spoken in the home" (Rajah-Carrim 2003: 70). For most Mauritians, English is the language acquired at school (Stein 1997). It is mostly taught as a written, rather than a spoken, language. That is why many Mauritians are not fluent in English. Although English is the official language, the language of administration and instruction, it has never gained acceptance in Mauritian society as a language of everyday interactions. Its use is clearly restricted to formal and written domains. As such, it is a prestigious language, which is thought to be indispensable for upward socio-economic mobility.

The limited knowledge of English could have been an obstacle to its use as an official language. But English has been preferred over other languages because it is an ethnically neutral language (Eriksen 1998). Unlike the other languages used on the island, English is not specifically associated with any ethnic group. That is, it is not the first or ancestral language of any group currently residing on the island. As will be shown in this dissertation, favouring one language over another at a national level can have political implications and can even lead to some inter-ethnic tensions. Thus, the use of English for official purposes could be described as a wise political

decision in that it removes any possibility of some ethnic groups feeling disadvantaged with respect to other English-speaking ones.

Unlike English, French, the other colonial language, has an ethnic undertone in that it is associated with the Franco-Mauritians. Indeed, it is the native and ancestral language of the descendants of the French colonisers. Although it is the language of the Franco-Mauritians, it is widely used by all ethnic groups for everyday interactions. In fact, French is, after Mauritian, the language most often used by Mauritians (Baggioni & Robillard 1990). Its perceived similarity with Mauritian makes it relatively accessible to the population. Interestingly, not only is French the native language of the Franco-Mauritians, but has also become that of some Mauritians of African, Chinese and Indian origins. Baggioni and Robillard (1990: 70) describe this French-speaking group as "néofrancophones". These neofrancophones associate French with "whiteness and what is perceived as its attributes: wealth, education" (*la blanchitude et à ce qui est perçu comme ses attributes: richesse, education* (Baggioni & Robillard 1990: 74)). As such, mastery of French becomes a very desirable attribute. In Mauritius therefore, French, like English, is seen as a prestigious language necessary for social advancement.

The two European languages are in a healthy position even though the use of English is restricted to formal domains only. Their situation can be contrasted to that of "ancestral" languages. This term refers to the languages that were used by the ancestors of the present-day population and includes Bengali, Bhojpuri, Hindi, Gujerati, Kutchi, Hakka, Mandarin, Marathi, Punjabi, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and

Urdu (Baker 1972: 14-18). These are the languages that the Asian migrants spoke at the time of their arrival in Mauritius. Today, most of these languages do not function as native languages (Rajah-Carrim 2003). In fact, some of the languages like Bengali and Punjabi have disappeared from the national linguistic landscape while others like Gujerati and Kutchi are in a precarious position. Other ancestral languages like Tamil, Telugu and Marathi, although not usually spoken in the home, are taught in primary school and thus, are in a less critical situation than Gujerati and Kutchi, for instance. But all these languages, with the exception of Bhojpuri, are slowly disappearing. These languages are losing their instrumental value, i.e., as means of communication, in favour of Mauritian.

Although ancestral languages are not used as languages of the home, they still have an important place in the lives of many Mauritians. This is so because they act as important markers of ethnic and religious identity. In fact, cultural and religious domains are sometimes thought of as their last strongholds. They have a symbolic function in the Mauritian context where ethnic identity has a crucial significance. Thus, Tamil becomes a marker of Tamil identity and Hindi that of Hindu identity. Linguistic affiliation is as important index of ethnic identity. In the 2000 Population Census, Mauritians were asked to state their linguistic group, i.e., the language(s) of their forefathers. Thus, claiming Marathi as the language of one's forefathers is equivalent to claiming membership in the Marathi linguistic group. And, the linguistic group is an index of one's cultural and/or religious affiliations. It is clear in the 2000 Population Census that Mauritians still pay close attention to these languages as markers of their ethnolinguistic identity. In fact, "many Indo-and Sino-

Mauritians generally see their history, at least their linguistic history, in terms of their Asian heritage" (Rajah-Carrim 2003: 69). The symbolic importance of the Asian languages ensures their survival in this highly competitive multilingual environment.

Therefore, through language, Mauritians can assert their ethnic identity. They can also use language to re-invent their ethnic/religious identity. For instance, in the 1983 census, 7.04% and 0.19% of the population reported having Arabic as the language of their forefathers and the language of their home, respectively (Stein 1986: 269). Yet, it is known that none of the Muslims in Mauritius are of Arab origin (Stein 1986, Hollup 1996, Eriksen 1998). Muslims, as mentioned in section 2.3, are largely of Indian origins and many have Bhojpuri as their ancestral language. That is, many Muslims share their linguistic history with the Indo-Mauritian Hindus. It has been argued that some Muslims feel threatened by the majority Hindu group (Hollup 1996). Therefore, by claiming Arabic – instead of Bhojpuri or any other Indian language, for that matter – as their ancestral language, these Muslims are asserting their own religious identity and specificities as a socio-religious group and distancing themselves from other Indo-Mauritian groups. Language, therefore, offers Mauritians with the possibility of maintaining or changing their socio-religious identities.

Furthermore, the 2000 Population Census shows that most Mauritians of Asian origins, i.e., those Mauritians who have an Asian language as the language of their forefathers, now use Mauritian in the home. Indeed, Mauritian has largely taken over many of the domains where these languages were used, especially in the home. Mauritian is undoubtedly the most common spoken language on the island. It is the

native language of most Mauritians and used by Mauritians of all ages, ethnicities, religions and socio-economic classes. Mauritian functions mainly as an oral language. At present, there is no official standard orthography. In fact, there are two major spelling systems currently in use – that of the group *Ledikasyon Pu Travayer* (LPT) and that of the Church. But many Mauritians do not adhere to any of these two orthographies and "invent" their own Mauritian spelling system (Chapter 4 focuses on the spelling systems of Mauritian).

In some quarters, Mauritian is a stigmatised variety. Attitudes to Mauritian conform to the general view that creoles are corrupt and grammatically simple (Sebba 1997). However, Mauritian is widely accepted as the language of national solidarity. Its status has been described as "an 'unofficial' national language" (Eriksen, 1990: 14). Because of its role as language of solidarity, some politicians have suggested that Mauritian should be promoted to the status of official national language, that is, a language that binds all Mauritians together and hence, a language that the whole nation can identify with. They proposed changing the national anthem from English to Mauritian (Foley 1992). Although Mauritian is extensively used on the island and valued by many Mauritians, such a proposal was strongly disapproved of by the general public. Many Mauritians saw in this proposal a threat to ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity. It was argued that all Mauritians would be "creolised".

Indeed, some Mauritians see Mauritian as the language of the Creole ethnic group. Given the low status of the group, it is not surprising that *their* language is also

viewed in a condescending manner. Through colonisation, the ancestors of the Creoles, the slaves, were deprived of their African language and culture. They had to adapt to the local situation. Mauritian became their language. Thus, the slaves' original ancestral languages have been replaced by Mauritian. Although Mauritian can be associated with Afro-Mauritians, it is not clear whether the language belongs to that group or to any other group on the island. As mentioned above, it has acquired a national dimension, and hence, is not restricted to the Creoles only. Therefore, there are competing ideologies regarding Mauritian. On the one hand, Mauritian is an instrument of national inclusion. On the other, it can be a marker of lower social status as it is associated with the economically and socially least successful group.

For a long time, the Government have relegated the issue and exact status of Mauritian to the background. However, the beginning of 2004 saw a change in attitudes of the ruling parties. Efforts are now being made to devise an official standard orthography for Mauritian. There are also plans to introduce Mauritian as a medium of instruction in primary school (Chapter 5 discusses the use of, and attitudes to the use of, Mauritian in the education sector). The Government now seem to have a language policy. In fact, in a public meeting in April 2004, the Prime Minister claimed that "the war of languages is over" (*la guerre des langues est derrière nous*) (*L'Express* 21 April 2004).

Is the war of languages really over? Interviews conducted in 2002 and 2003 and personal observation show that this is not the case. Languages still exist in a competitive relationship in Mauritius. The case of Mauritian is still very complex.

While it is generally valued as a binding force of the Mauritian nation, it is often only viewed as a broken or corrupt variety of its prestigious lexifier, French. There are even situations where the language is associated with creolisation and loss of one's ancestral ethnic identity. But how can Mauritian be associated with creolisation? And, what exactly does creolisation mean in the Mauritian context? In the section below, we address these questions after having briefly discussed the concept of diglossia and illustrated the relationship between language and ideologies of power and identity in the Mauritian context.

2.7.1 Diglossia

Diglossia can be defined as

> the reservation of highly valued segments of a community's linguistic repertoire (…) for situations perceived as more formal and guarded; and the reservation of less highly valued segments (…) for situations perceived as more informal and intimate.

<div align="right">(Fasold 1984: 53)</div>

In a classic diglossic situation, High varieties are reserved for prestigious domains like religious sermons, university lectures and poetry; while Low varieties are used for less prestigious ones such as conversation with family and friends and folk literature (Ferguson 1959: 329). H(igh) and L(ow) varieties also differ in terms of their modes of acquisition. The L variety is usually acquired in the home environment in an "unselfconscious way" (Fasold 1984: 36). The acquisition of L tends to preceed that of H which is usually learnt formally at school. Unlike L, therefore, H is acquired is a selfconscious way.

The linguistic situation of Mauritius has been described as a diglossic one (e.g, Stein 1982, Baggioni & Robillard 1990). There are a number of diglossic levels in operation at the national level. The figure below, adapted from Robillard (1989: 161), illustrates this point.

	French & English	(2) H varieties
(1) H variety	Mauritian	L variety
L variety	Bhojpuri	

Figure 2.2. Diglossia in the Mauritian context

The above figure suggests that there is an intersection between two diglossic situations. The situation in Mauritius could therefore be described as a double overlapping one (Fasold 1984: 45). In the first diglossic situation (1), Bhojpuri is the L variety and Mauritian the H one (the classical Indian languages, like Hindi and Urdu, are also H varieties with respect to Bhojpuri – Indian languages and Bhojpuri represent another diglossic situation). In the Mauritian context, it is clear that Mauritian enjoys more prestige than Bhojpuri which is an index of rustic life (Eisenlohr 2004). But with respect to the colonial languages French and English, Mauritian is a L variety (diglossic situation (2)). Mauritian therefore finds itself in two diglossic situations. The L status of Mauritian with respect to French and English is further discussed in the following chapters.

2.7.2 Languages and ideologies of power and identity: Two examples

We have seen that ethnic identity and language are intimately tied in the Mauritian context. Language as an index of identity is sometimes used as a political tool to favour or hinder the interests of some groups. In the local context, therefore,

language ideologies have "far-reaching consequences for issues of political power, diasporic allegiances, and ideas of nationhood" (Eisenlohr 2004: 65). Below are two examples that illustrate the interaction between conceptions of language and ideologies of identity and power in Mauritius.

The Telugus form a small group within the official Hindu group. They are not recognised as a separate group in the official Population Census. The *National Telugu Federation* want to preserve and promote the Telugu identity. In an attempt to assert the Telugu identity, the Federation asked Telugus to over-report their use of Telugu for the 1983 census. The following advertisement appeared in newspapers (quoted from Eriksen 1998: 78):

> **National Telugu Federation**
> All Telugus of Mauritius are asked, as regards the new
> population census, to write in the columns 11-12-13:
> *Telugu – Telugu – Telugu*
> Thank you

The Telugus were asked to quote "Telugu" as their religion, ancestral language and language usually spoken at home. The ancestral language was used as an index of ethnic identity given that the former census category "ethnic membership" is no longer used. In a country where financial aids are given on the basis of group numbers, it is not surprising that some groups would want to over-communicate their ethnic identity in order to get a larger share of the available resources. Therefore, nominating Telugu as the ancestral language and the language of the home can have clear socio-political implications in the multiethnic Mauritian context. As Eriksen (1998: 79) points out, a "Mauritian interest group has an unspoken right to more

power the larger the number of members it can credibly claim". The census, therefore, becomes an important tool for asserting one's linguistic, and hence, cultural identity. This example illustrates how linguistic identity is tied with ideologies of power in the local context.

The case of the bank notes in 1998 further exemplifies the interactions between language ideologies and politics of identity on the island. Mauritian bank notes contain inscriptions in English, Tamil and Hindi (the inscriptions occur in that order). However, in 1998, when new bank notes were issued, the Tamil inscriptions followed the Hindi ones. The Government claimed that there had been an error at the level of the printers and this inadvertent rearrangement had no socio-political undertones. This seemingly benign situation upset some members of the Tamil community. The sociocultural groups *Mauritius Tamil Temples Federation* (MTTF) and *Tamil Council* (TC) claimed that their rights had been taken away and caused some social unrest. The Tamil Minister Kadress Pillay threatened to resign from his post if the notes were not destroyed and replaced by new ones with inscriptions in the correct language order (*Le Mauricien* 9 November 1998).

The Tamils' argument was based on the fact that their ancestors had been among the first groups to settle on the island and the order of languages on the notes was a testimony to their long presence on the island and their contribution to its development. A number of letters to the editor highlighted the Tamils' discontent with the situation. They attributed this change to the dominant group's (the Hindus)

desire to exercise power over minority groups. Below are some extracts that appeared in the daily *Le Mauricien*:

> Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam's advice never to touch religion, tradition and language of the people was part of the old mind set and not valid now. The present credo seems to be supremacy! Supremacy! The hegemonic attitude can be the only explanation to justify the relegation of the Tamil inscription to the last position on the new bank notes (....) There is a deliberate rape of history. The Tamils' contribution is just ignored, their dignity slighted and their acquired rights snatched.

> <div align="right">(B.Narsinghen, Le Mauricien 6 November 1998: 6)</div>

> No doubt, this unexpected but insidiously planned endeavour [change of language order] was welcomed with opened arms by a certain section of the population and helped to boost their morale because they had always considered it an eyesore (...) [The Tamils] have won a battle and they must now win the war – their legitimate share of the national cake (...) They must keep going, for their own sake and that of their community at any stage.

> <div align="right">(A.Pouli, Le Mauricien 8 January 1999: 6)</div>

These two extracts illustrate some of the feelings of the Tamil community over the bank notes issue. They see clear political intentions in the relegation of Tamil to the third position. For them, the rearrangement of the language order on the notes was "deliberate" and "insidiously planned" by the powerful Hindus. They explained the relegation of their language to the third position in terms of the dominant group's desire to assert their supremacy and oppress the minority groups. As a minority group, the Tamils tend to get absorbed within the majority Hindu group. Through language, therefore, they can assert their unique Tamil identity and distance themselves from the dominant Hindu group. The Tamils, like the Telugus and the Muslims who quoted Arabic as their language, are fighting for "their legitimate share of the national cake" and against the hegemony of the Hindu community.

The Tamils were not the only group to react to the reordering of languages on the bank notes. The Hindu nationalist group *Voice of the Hindus* (VOH) argued that the second and third places of Hindi and Tamil respectively, should be maintained because the Hindus form a majority within the Mauritian population (*Le Mauricien* 5 December 1998). It is therefore their right to have their language preceding Tamil. As Pouli had pointed out, they "welcomed with opened arms" the change in language order. Muslims also joined the debates on the bank notes. The Muslim political party, *Hizbullah*, asked for Urdu or Arabic to be included on the bank notes. An apparently simple issue had led to heated debates about ethnic identity and political power. The Government were finally forced to replace the new bank notes with newer ones where the languages were arranged in the original order. This move cost the country millions of rupees. Urdu and Arabic were not included on the newer bank notes. This did not lead to any protest or social unrest as the Hizbullah did not take the issue any further.

The bank note example illustrates the emotional attachment that Mauritians have to their cultural and/or religious languages. Although Tamil is hardly spoken in everyday interactions in Mauritius, it has a high ethnic index. The same can be said of languages like Hindi and Urdu. Linguistic policies are intimately tied to ideologies of power and identity. Any attempt to change language policies can have serious socio-political implications. As such, languages should not be tampered with (quote at the beginning of Chapter 1 and also mentioned by Narsinghen above).

2.8 The concept of creolisation

There are several definitions of the term *creolisation* in both the linguistics and anthropological domains (e.g., Hannerz 1992, Holm 1988, Romaine 1988, Baker 1997a, Eriksen 1999, Dubois & Melançon 2000, Chaudenson 2001, Medea 2002, Schneider 2003). From the linguistics perspective, for instance, creolisation can be defined as a process giving rise to "a language with native speakers which results from language contact without normal transmission" (Sebba 1997: 136). Creolisation therefore involves contact between different languages and the "expansion" of linguistic resources and domains of use (Romaine 1988: 2; Holm 2000: 7).

Anthropologists have borrowed the term from linguistics and turned it into "more of a generic term, of wider applicability" (Hannerz 1992: 66). In anthropology, creolisation is defined very broadly as "the process whereby new shared cultural forms, and new possibilities for communication, emerge due to contact" (Eriksen 1999: 14). The concept focuses on "mixtures of different cultural practices in entire societies" (Schneider 2003: 215).

Creolisation, therefore, is a process which evokes the notion of mixing leading to a new language/identity. Hybridity, creativity and dynamism are characteristics of creolisation. In the case of Mauritius, colonisation and slavery led to the creation of a new language, a creole. It is interesting that the term most widely used to refer to the language evokes the very process through which the language came into being. The language is, in some sense, a testimony to the history of the people of Mauritius.

From an anthropological perspective, "all the cultures of all the ethnic groups in Mauritius are creolised to a greater or lesser extent" (Eriksen 1999). For instance, Indo-Mauritians eat Chinese noodles while Sino-Mauritians eat Indian curries. The different ethnic groups have influenced each other, but the degree of creolisation of each ethnic group varies significantly (Arnaud Carpooran, personal communication, interview in 2003). In other words, all Mauritians are creolised but some more so than others. Thus, in spite of this "obvious cultural creolisation evident throughout Mauritian society" (Eriksen 1999), the term *creole* is used to refer to a specific group of people, the Afro-Mauritians. However, this has not always been the case. At the time of colonisation and slavery, *Creole* was used to refer to people born on the colony (Mgr Nagapen, personal communication, interview in 2003; also Beaton 1859, Moutou 1996). Attached to the term, therefore, was the notion of locality. Any Mauritian, be it of Indian, Chinese, African or French origins, born on the island was a Creole. Thus, it was possible to have Indo-Mauritian Creoles, Sino-Mauritian Creoles. In many creole-speaking communities, the term *Creole* is still used to refer to the locals (Chaudenson 2001).

However, in Mauritius, the category *Creole* has acquired a different meaning. It has an ethnic connotation. According to Benedict (1965: 14),

> originally the word 'creole' meant a person of French descent born in Mauritius, but today it means a Mauritian of mixed African or Indian and European descent. What the eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century Frenchman would have called a Creole is today a Franco-Mauritian.

In fact, the term has been used differently by different authors (Baggioni & Robillard 1990, Moutou 1996, Allen 1999, Chaudenson 2001). A Creole, as we

now understand it on the island, is someone, at least partly, of African origin – with curly black hair, dark complexion. In Mauritius, therefore, the word *Creole* can have various social and cultural connotations from which many Mauritians might want to dissociate themselves. Mauritians of African origin are generally part of the lowest socio-economic class of society. Creoles are also associated with such negative traits as laziness and carelessness (Eriksen 1998: 54).

In some ways, Creoles seem to be the pariahs of Mauritian society and suffer from low self-esteem. The term *malaise créole* has been used to refer to their current situation and their inability to fully participate in, and benefit from, the socio-economic progress of the nation (Cerveaux 1998). According to Eriksen (1999), the *malaise créole* "has been one of the most pressing public issues in Mauritius" in the 1990s. The social history of the Creoles can help explain their current *malaise*.

The ancestors of the present-day Creoles were deprived of their ancestral language and culture. They had to convert to Christianity (Moutou 1996). Unlike the Indian immigrants, therefore, African slaves had to reject their cultural and religious practices and abide by the rules of the colonisers. In other words, they were devoid of their cultural baggage and thus, the "degree of cultural continuity among the slave group was by default limited" (Eriksen 1999). According to the historian, Diana Bablee (personal communication, interview in 2003), the slaves and their descendants acquired a *self-hate* attitude. They were taught to look up to their masters' culture and despise their own African traditions and way of life (also, Moutou 1996). The break with their original culture and their self-hate attitude meant

that the slaves and their descendants were disadvantaged with respect to other groups on the island. At the time of the abolition of slavery, slaves became apprentices and had to carry on working with their masters. Once their apprenticeship was over, they were free individuals. Most liberated slaves refused to work in the sugarcane fields, a reminder of their past servitude. They were replaced by Indian indentured labourers. Many of the ex-slaves settled along the coast and became fishermen. Thus, they were part of the lowest classes of society and in a way, geographically isolated themselves from other groups. Given this situation, it is not surprising that they lagged behind the rest of the population socially and economically. It is sometimes argued that the State has ignored the needs of the Creoles and hence, their socio-economic situation has not improved compared to that of the other ethnic groups.

Some people, especially Creole priests, are actively involved in promoting the social, economic and linguistic interests of the Creoles. For instance, Father Fanchette and Father Cerveaux interviewed in 2003 have actively been campaigning for the use of Mauritian in the Church and for the recognition of Creoles as a separate and socially deprived group within the Christian community. For a long time, this group have been marginalised and left to fend for themselves without their religious institution taking care of them. This neglect has also taken a linguistic form. For instance, the persistent use of French and long absence of Mauritian in the Church are seen as denials of the linguistic needs of Creoles. The Creole population have been forced to adapt to the prevailing language ideologies of the Church.

However, the Creoles themselves can act as a barrier to their own socio-economic progress. Their negativity towards their own culture and language is reflected in their attitudes towards the use of Mauritian in the Church. Indeed, both Fathers point out that when they initially used Mauritian, Creole parishioners did not approve of their language choice. The initial reserve has slowly faded out. Creoles have learnt to take pride in their own identity. However, in present-day Mauritian society, the term *Creole* can still evoke negative stereotypes.

In the Mauritian context, the term *creolisation* is taken to mean "becoming Creole" (e.g., Foley 1992) – with all the stereotypes that this term implies. In some sense, instead of involving linguistic and cultural contact, the term creolisation has come to mean the loss of one's own cultural identity in favour of a creole one. This was especially the case in 1982. When the national anthem was changed from English to Mauritian and the ruling parties proposed the introduction of Mauritian at official levels, there was a general uproar and many people feared becoming "Creole". It was believed that there would be no place for cultural diversity within this "one nation, one people" identity. All Mauritians would have a uniform Creole identity which evokes "mixing or impurity, openness and individualism" (Eriksen 1999). These characteristics are generally not valued in Mauritian community where cultural purity, conservatism, continuity and stability are seen as key elements of the various non-Creole ethnic groups. In Mauritius, therefore, creolisation has come to mean "becoming Creole", i.e., becoming like those Mauritians who are described as Creoles. Given that the Creoles are not highly viewed in the Mauritian community, it is not surprising that the creolisation process tends to be negatively perceived.

Furthermore, in the Mauritian context, there exists an indexical relation between linguistic creolisation and cultural creolisation. In some sense, Mauritian, the creole language, is seen as part of the process of becoming creolised. The example of the national anthem referred to above illustrates this point. It was believed that the use of Mauritian could lead to the other ethnic groups becoming Creole. Thus, for some Mauritians, use of a creole language implies Creole ethnicity. For these people, the variety that has arisen out of linguistic creolisation has acquired an ethnic meaning in that it has come to mark an ethnic group. This view seems to ignore the fact that this creole language is used by many non-Creoles on the island as well.

The above paragraphs highlight the link between Mauritian and Creole identity. This is a notion that comes up now and again in discussions about Mauritian. For instance, in discussing attitudes to the introduction of Mauritian in the education system and its use as a written language, a number of Mauritians allude to the link between the language and the Creole ethnic group. I discuss these responses along with non-ethnic ones in the following chapters and show how Mauritian is sometimes understood as the language of the Creoles and often, as that of the Mauritian nation.

2.9 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the geographic, historical, social, economic and linguistic situations of Mauritius. The socio-historical and economic context of the nation is important in discussions on present language use and attitudes of the local community.

Furthermore, this chapter has highlighted the pervasive nature of ethnicity in Mauritian daily life. Loyalties usually lie with specific ethnic and religious groups rather than the nation as a whole. In present-day Mauritius, ethnic groups constantly compete over limited resources and access to power. The competitive relationship that exists among ethnic groups is reflected in local language behaviours, as will be shown in the following chapters.

Moreover, this chapter has underlined the complex linguistic situation of the island. It has also shown the ambiguous linguistic and ethnic/national nature of Mauritian. While some Mauritians believe that Mauritian is a full-fledged language, others argue that it is only a broken variety or a patois. That is, there is no consensus as to whether or not Mauritian is a language. Also, on the one hand, Mauritian is seen and promoted as a national language that transcends all ethnic barriers. On the other, it is associated with the Creole ethnic group. There are therefore different language ideologies at work in Mauritian society. Some of these language ideologies are explored in the next chapters.

This chapter, therefore, serves as an important background to the rest of the study. I have highlighted some of the issues that will be of relevance to the following chapters where we discuss attitudes to, and use of, Mauritian.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the methods used for gathering data for this study. The data contained in this thesis combine first-hand knowledge of Mauritian society with material obtained through interviews, perceptual dialectology maps and participant-observation in Mauritian society. I conducted fieldwork in Mauritius in 2 phases: from June to August 2002 and from July to September 2003. Over these 6 months, I adapted tested methods for inquiring into language beliefs and attitudes to the local situation.

In the first section of this chapter, I describe the general approach adopted in this study. I then go on to discuss my main source of information: interviews. In the following section, I examine the perceptual dialectology approach adopted in 2003. I then consider the importance of participant observation. I also discuss role-plays which were conducted in 2002 but which have not had any direct use for this study. In the penultimate section, I discuss some methodological considerations. I then conclude with a summary.

3.1 A multidisciplinary approach

The multilingual nature of Mauritius means that Mauritians have the choice of using a wide array of languages in any given context. Given this situation, the language choices that Mauritians actually make can be varied and complex. That is, *"who*

speaks *what* language to *whom* and *when*" (Fishman 1972a: 15 – italics in original text) can be influenced by a variety of factors – linguistic, social and also, psychological.

For this reason, some linguists have advocated a multidisciplinary approach to the study of language use and attitudes: an approach that combines social psychology with linguistics (e.g, Cooper & Fishman 1974, Ryan *et al*. 1982, Baker 1995, Adegbija 2000). According to Fasold (1984), language use can be studied from various perspectives: sociology, social psychology and anthropology. The sociological approach, put forward by Fishman in the 1960s, sees societal factors as reasons for specific language choices and uses. Fishman (1972a) suggests that there are specific domains – that is, location, topic and participant – for the use of a given language.

In his study of Turkish immigrant communities in Australia and Western Europe, Yağmur (2004) adopts a sociological approach. He discusses language use in the three domains: location, topic and participant. His respondents (40 from Australia and 15 from Germany) filled out a questionnaire on their language use and choice (Yağmur *et al*. 1999). The sociological findings provided important data for the analysis of ethnolinguistic vitality of the Australian and German groups (more on ethnolinguistic vitality in section 7.7, Chapter 7). The vitality of each group was assessed using a social psychological framework similar to that of Bourhis *et al*. (1981). Generally, for a sociological study, as exemplified by Yağmur's study, a sample representative of the target population is interviewed and/or observed. Through statistical tests, generalisations can then be made for the population.

The sociological approach is related to studies of diglossia (Chapter 2). In a diglossic situation, the H language is used in formal and prestigious domains, while the L language is generally limited to informal domains. Diglossia therefore makes use of domain analysis. In his 2001 study, for instance, Bernsten shows how the South African government aim to promote the indigenous languages in High or "power domains such as education, government, media and business" (Bernsten 2001: 219). The underlying assumption is that the introduction of indigenous varieties in prestigious domains will help promote their use and enhance their status. However, this has not happened. The use of English has been increasing – in a number of domains – at the expense of the indigenous languages. Bernsten's study reveals the link between the sociological approach to the study of language and the concept of diglossia.

Moreover, Yağmur's (2004) study has shown that the sociological approach can serve as background to, and be complemented by, the social psychological one. The social psychological perspective focuses on the individual as the decision-maker (Giles 1973). Specific language choices are attributed to psychological factors rather than societal ones. That is, individual motives and perceptions are the focal point of a social psychological study of language choice. For instance, using a social psychological framework, Davis & Houck (1992: 116) test "the proposition that in east-central Indiana, different dialects of female speech affect the perceived socioeconomic status and personality traits of female speakers". The experiment was set up in this way: forty-nine respondents were asked to give some background information about themselves and then rate four speeches on fourteen social status

and personality traits, e.g., reliability, politeness, feminity and education. Individual responses were gathered and generalisations drawn. Through this quantitative approach, the authors established that the Northern dialect speakers, i.e., the prestige speakers, were seen to have more socio-economic prestige and better personality traits than the Southern dialect ones, i.e., the non-prestige speakers. Like sociologists, therefore, social psychologists make use of questionnaires and statistics. They also rely on observations conducted under experimental conditions.

As for anthropologists, they see the individual as part of a sociocultural group and are interested

> in how the individual speaker is dealing with the structure of his society, but not in terms of his own psychological needs so much as how that person is using his language choices to reveal his cultural values.
>
> (Fasold 1984: 192)

An anthropological approach, therefore, attributes individual language choices to sociocultural values and norms. Adopting an anthropological approach means focusing on the individual's position in a sociocultural community and its values. The norm is therefore to study uncontrolled language behaviour. Although statistical methods are sometimes used by anthropologists, they are not as prevalent as in the sociological and social psychological approaches (Fasold 1984).

Echeverria (2003), for instance, adopts an anthropological approach to the study of linguistic practices in the Basque nation. She argues that Basque language and culture is essentially male-oriented with female contribution minimised or ignored. Her research in the San Sebastian community spanned over a year, thus giving her enough time to familiarise herself with the community and its values. She focused on

students' language ideologies and practices. She combined a variety of methods for her study. Classroom observation of linguistic practices formed an important part of her research. She also "collected curricular materials and newspaper articles relating to Basque identity and Basque language instruction" (Echeverria 2003: 384). To learn more about students' backgrounds and language practices, she administered short questionnaires and conducted some interviews. Using the indexicality framework (e.g., Ochs 1992), Echeverria highlights the relationship between language ideologies, nationhood and gender. Through all these methods and her knowledge of the local community, therefore, Echeverria was able to study how the people in San Sebastian "use [their] language choices to reveal [their] cultural values".

The above paragraphs suggest that there are different ways of investigating linguistic practices. The three approaches explored above give different insights into language attitudes and patterns of language use. Quantitative and qualitative approaches can serve to complement each other (e.g, Bankston & Henry 1998, Berkley 2001, Ewart & Straw 2001, Matiki 2003). In this study, I adopt a multidimensional approach in that I combine the three perspectives and their methodologies in order to get a broad picture of language practices and ideologies in Mauritius.

3.2 Interviews

The interviews combine different approaches to the study of language attitudes and use in that they enable us to explore societal and individual factors determining and explaining beliefs and behaviours. Interviews were conducted in 2002 and 2003.

3.2.1 Interviews in 2002

The first set of interviews was conducted in 2002. They were structured around a set questionnaire (Appendix I) directing respondents' discussion on their beliefs about Mauritian, its domains and distribution of use and about ethnic affiliation. Two types of questions were used to guide the discussion: Description Questions (DQ) and Attitude Questions (AQ) (following Beckford-Wassink 1999).

DQ described the linguistic characteristics of Mauritian, surveyed its use and implicitly brought forth attitudes towards the language. The language attitudes of the respondents were examined through their perceptions of the suitability of use of Mauritian in certain domains and with certain addressees. AQ explicitly elicited attitudes towards Mauritian. AQ differentiated how interviewees felt about using and hearing the language from how they felt about the language itself.

Furthermore, DQ and AQ addressed the question of ownership of Mauritian from a descriptive perspective and an attitudinal one, respectively. By asking who uses Mauritian the most and what Mauritian suggests about the character of a person, for instance, the questions directed respondents towards a definition of the prototypical speaker of the language and a possible description of its owner. Some of the DQ and AQ (e.g, questions DQ4, AQ12 in Appendix I) examined stereotypes attached to speakers of Mauritian. They also elicited how Mauritians used language to construct their identity with respect to the Other.

A total of 79 interviews were carried out over a three-month period. Initially, my plan was to conduct as many group interviews as possible. Although group interviews are more difficult to transcribe than individual interviews, they are less time-consuming to conduct than the latter (Hoinville *et al.* 1978, Oppenheim 1992). Also, they provide concrete linguistic evidence of how Mauritians interact and can provide more accurate data in that respondents may check other respondents when they disagree on reported use or belief (Blom & Gumperz 1972, Beckford-Wassink 1999).

However, after conducting a few group interviews, I realised that it was difficult to obtain information on all the relevant issues from all the interviewees in the group. There were one or two respondents who tended to dominate the discussions and other respondents would just agree with the group "leader". This proved to be a problem because I was interested in each interviewee's individual opinion rather than only the leader's opinion. Also, as could be expected, interviews of four to six people were very difficult to transcribe. For these reasons, I preferred individual interviews to group ones.

The set questionnaire had to be modified to suit the level of education of the respondents. For instance, 5 of my 79 interviewees were illiterate. Therefore, questions regarding use of written Mauritian (e.g., DQ 10 Appendix I) were excluded from their interviews.

Depending on the willingness of the interviewees to elaborate on the answers they put forward and their level of education, individual interviews lasted between 10 to 90 minutes. Group interviews lasted on average 45 minutes.

Interviewees were recruited through friends and acquaintances. Their age, level of education, ethnicity and religion varied. The motivation for including each of these variables is discussed below.

3.2.1.1 Interviewees' background

Interviewees were asked to complete a form (Appendix II) at the end of the interview. Background information about the respondents was thus collected. The following factors were coded for each respondent:

1. age

2. ethnicity

3. religion

4. level of education

5. place of residence

6. gender

Although these six individual characteristics/factors were noted, not all of them will be considered in this study. For instance, the relevance of gender and place of residence to the research questions were beyond the scope of this study. The focus was on the first four non-linguistic factors, especially ethnicity and religion.

3.2.1.2 Age

Respondents were divided into five age-groups: <13; 13-19; 20-39; 40-59 and >59. These five age-groups were selected because they represent important stages in the life of a Mauritian.

Under the age of thirteen, Mauritian children still attend primary school and are still dependent on their parents. Their language views might not be well-developed at this stage. Between the ages of 13 and 19, Mauritians attend secondary school. The teens are an important stage where individuals affirm their personality and develop their own opinions and attitudes. This young generation is usually at the "forefront of social change" (Martinez 2003: 38). We can therefore expect their language attitudes to differ from that of older generations. Between the ages of 20 and 39, Mauritians usually get married, start a family and join the work market. By the ages of 40 to 59, Mauritians tend to be more settled in terms of family-life and work. Retirement is at 60 years.

It is expected that individuals will have nuanced language uses and attitudes at the various stages of their life. Age is, therefore, considered an important variable in this study.

3.2.1.3 Ethnicity

As mentioned in Chapter 2, divisions along ethnic lines are a key way of categorising individuals in Mauritius. I am interested in the link between language attitudes and ideologies of identity. Given that ethnicity is such an important part of an

individual's identity in Mauritius (Chapter 2), language behaviour becomes tied to ethnic identity. It was therefore important to code respondents for their ethnicity.

3.2.1.4 Religion

Like ethnicity, religion is a vital way of defining a person's identity in Mauritius (Chapter 2). There are times when religious and ethnic identities coincide and reinforce each other and others where they do not. In discussions of language ideologies in Mauritius, therefore, it is crucial to consider both interviewees' religious and ethnic groups.

3.2.1.5 Level of education

Respondents' level of education was included in the "personal information" section because it was thought to have an impact on language use and attitudes. This is so because access to French, and especially English, is largely through the school-system (Chapter 2). Therefore, the more educated people are in Mauritius, the more likely it is that they will be fluent in French and/or English. Mauritians who have not had or have had limited access to education use mostly Mauritian and their ancestral language. Usually, the younger generations have had more opportunities to pursue secondary, and often tertiary, education than the older ones. Level of education is, therefore, very likely to influence one's competence in, and use of, varieties other than Mauritian and ancestral languages.

3.2.1.6 The interviewees

The tables below give the breakdown of respondents by ethnicity, religion, age-group, gender and place of residence.

Respondents		Age Groups					Place of Residence		Total
		<13	13-19	20-39	40-59	>59	Urban	Rural	
IM	Male	0	1	5	5	1	10	2	12
Hindus (24)	Female	0	2	8	2	0	7	5	12
IM	Male	1	2	10	3	0	13	3	16
Muslims (27)	Female	0	2	1	4	4	10	1	11
AF (11)	Male	1	2	0	1	0	4	0	4
	Female	2	1	0	3	1	7	0	7
FM (7)	Male	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	2
	Female	0	0	0	0	5	5	0	5
CP/Mixed	Male	0	2	0	1	2	5	0	5
(10)	Female	0	1	2	1	1	4	1	5
Total		4	13	27	21	14	65	14	79

Table 3.1.Respondents by ethnicity, gender, religion, age-group and place of residence.

The detailed information in Table 3.1 is condensed in the table and figures below.
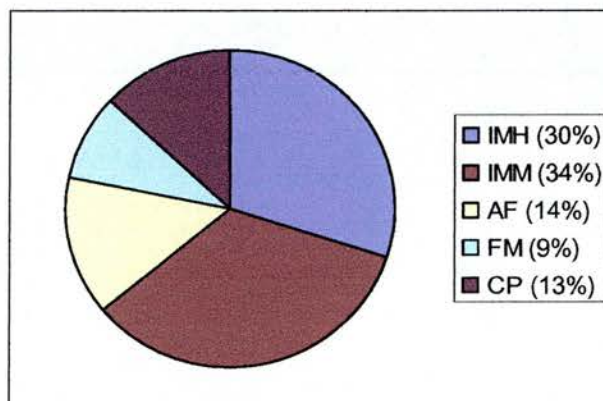
Figure 3.1. Percentage of respondents by ethnic group.
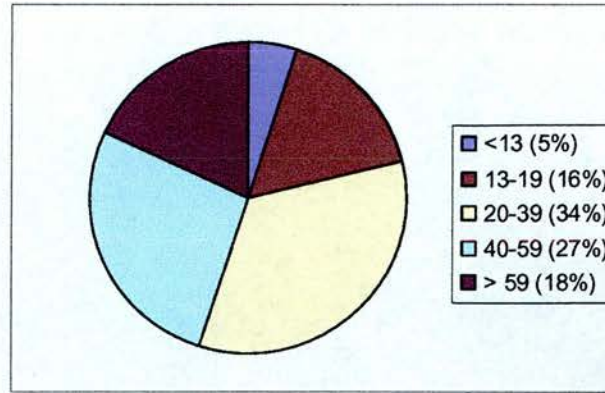
Figure 3.2. Percentage of respondents by age-group.

	Respondents	% of corpus
Ethnicity/Religion	IMH	30
	IMM	34
	AF	14
	FM	9
	CP	13
Age-group	<13	5
	13-19	16
	20-39	34
	40-59	27
	>59	18
Gender	Male	49
	Female	51
Place of Residence	Urban	82
	Rural	18

Table 3.2. Ethnicity, age-group, gender and place of residence in the corpus.

3.2.1.7 Language of interviews

Most of the interviews were carried out in Mauritian. People who had not had access or had had limited access to education were always interviewed in Mauritian. Interviewees who were fluent in Mauritian, English and French, were asked which language they wanted the interview to be in. Most of them opted for Mauritian. Some interviews started off in English, but during the conversation, the interviewees switched to Mauritian. It was then agreed that the interview would be continued in Mauritian.

Most of my interviewees were clearly more comfortable with the use of Mauritian. This could be explained by the fact that although Mauritians master English and French, they are more fluent in their mother-tongue, Mauritian. Also, had it been a more formal situation, they would probably have opted for English or French. Because I belong to the Mauritian community and speak Mauritian fluently, I was not perceived as an outsider by the interviewees. In other words, my Mauritian origins appeared to override the inherent formality of an interview.

3.2.1.8 Location of interviews

Interviews were conducted in the respondents' home, workplace or in cafés. Background noise in public places like cafés made it difficult to conduct interviews.

3.2.1.9 My role as the interviewer

My role during the interview sessions was limited. I put forward the questions and allowed the interviewees to answer them. I would only intervene to clarify questions

or answers. I tried to keep my interventions to a minimum so as not to bias interviewees. There were times when the interviewees would draw me into the discussion, but I tried to keep my distance and evade the questions. For instance, I asked one of my interviewees what he thought about the introduction of Mauritian in school. He argued that he was against it because Mauritian was a not a proper language and was useless for international communication. He then asked me what I thought about the matter. I only replied that there was pressure on the government to introduce the language at school. Even though my answer dealt with the matter of education, I had not answered his question. I then proceeded to the next question.

Generally, therefore, I refrained from expressing my own views for fear of influencing my respondents. In other words, the interviewees did not know my own standpoint and were allowed to express their views freely. It is important to clearly define the role of the interviewer when analysing the data. This is so because "without a careful assessment of the effects of field-workers on sociolinguistic data, we can never know to what extent these data represent the typical linguistic behaviour of informants" (Cukor-Avila 2000: 254).

3.2.1.10 Interviewees' names

At the end of the interviews, I asked respondents whether I could use their actual first name in my work. Most respondents were agreeable to having their first names used in this dissertation. I have used pseudonyms for those interviewees who did not want their real names included in my work.

3.2.2 Interviews in 2003

The interviews conducted in the second phase of the fieldwork targeted very specific groups of people: religious representatives, historians, linguists and journalists. There was no set questionnaire for these interviews.

3.2.2.1 Religious representatives

Religious representatives of the three main religious factions (Hinduism, Christianity and Islam) were interviewed regarding the use of Mauritian in the religious domain. As shown in Chapter 2, religion has a crucial place in Mauritius. Therefore, it was thought important to analyse language use in churches, mosques and temples and to assess the views of religious leaders concerning the use of Mauritian in religious activities. Some Christian priests strongly advocate the use of Mauritian in the Church (Fathers Fanchette and Cerveaux, personal communication, interviewed individually in 2003). As mentioned in Chapter 2, this is seen as a way of empowering and raising the self-esteem of the Creoles who form the largest group among the Christians (the other groups being the Franco-Mauritians and the Coloured Population). Such views suggest a link between the ethnic group Creole and the language. Hence, I considered it necessary to speak to some of the priests who adopted this line of thinking. Interviews with Christian priests, therefore, took an added significance: not only did they reveal language choice in the Church, but they also shed light on the indexical relations between the Creoles, the Church and Mauritian.

I interviewed four Christian priests. Two of these priests, Father Fanchette and Father Cerveaux, were Creoles themselves and were actively involved in promoting the use of Mauritian in the Church. I also spoke to Father Chung, the editor of the well-known publication *La Vie Catholique*, a Christian weekly paper which promotes the use of Mauritian. The third priest to be interviewed was Monseigneur Nagapen. He is a retired priest and a historian. Before his retirement, he was actively involved in the administration of the Church.

Furthermore, I interviewed two Hindu pandits and one Hindu academic who is very involved in the religious domain. Information about language use in mosques was obtained from three locally well-known religious representatives. I also interviewed Dr Hoossain Nahaboo, the first person to translate the Quran from Arabic to Mauritian in 1982.

3.2.2.2 Historians, linguists and journalists

I interviewed historians, linguists and journalists so as to get some background information about the historical, social and linguistic situations of Mauritius. Information gathered from these three groups of people will be incorporated in the following chapters.

3.2.3 Equipment

The 2002 interviews were recorded on minidisks. In 2003, recordings were made on DAT recorders. In both cases, omnidirectional microphones were used. For some of the 2002 interviews, two microphones had to be used for large groups of 5 to 6 people.

3.3 Perceptual dialect maps

While analysing the 2002 interview data, it became clear that my interviewees had an understanding of what counted as "pure" (*pir*) or "true" (*vre*) forms of Mauritian – even though they believed that Mauritian was a non-standard language. I went back to Mauritius in 2003 and conducted some perceptual dialect/folk linguistics research to find out more about these "pure" forms of the language. According to Preston (1993: 375), folk linguistics "provides a surer consideration of the limited data of language attitude surveys and an important supplement to the much more general study of production differences". It focuses on users' beliefs and perceptions. Like anthropology, perceptual dialect research clearly places language into its sociocultural context. According to Baugh (1993), studies of language in society cannot be limited to experimental methods. This is so because language varieties "are inherently social, regional and political entities" (1993: 169) which have to be studied in their social contexts. Perceptual dialect research has been carried on in a number of countries, including USA (Preston 1993), Turkey (Demirci & Kleiner 1999), Hungary (Kontra 2002), Spain (Fernández & Fernández 2002), Korea (Long & Yim 2002) but not in Mauritius.

In 2003, I conducted perceptual dialect research on the island. Hundred respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire which contained a map of Mauritius with its nine administrative districts (Appendix III). The aims of these questionnaires were to further assess attitudes to Mauritian and also, local notions of linguistic purity. Respondents were first asked whether "all Mauritians speak Mauritian in the same".

If they replied by the negative, they then had to circle the district(s) where they thought that the purest forms of Mauritian were spoken.

These findings will be analysed with reference to the 2000 Population Census of Mauritius where the ethnic make-up of each region and language use in each district are given. Through this comparison, we will be able to further assess the indexical value of "pure" Mauritian.

Respondents were coded for the following factors:

1. age

2. gender

3. ethnicity/religion

4. place of residence

As for the 2002 survey, respondents were divided into 5 age-groups (<13, 13-19, 20-39, 40-59, >59) and 2 places of residence (urban, rural). Chinese respondents are included in this part of the study. All the interviews of Chinese origin are Christians and could therefore be included among the General Population (Chapter 2).

Respondents were recruited in 2 ways:

1. I asked respondents the questions and completed the forms for them. Twenty questionnaires were completed in this manner.

2. I gave some questionnaires to some friends and acquaintances. They, in turn, got their friends, colleagues or relatives to complete the questionnaires. The remaining eighty questionnaires were completed in this way.

To maintain consistency between data obtained through methods 1 and 2, I did not prompt the respondents that I personally interviewed. Also, since the questionnaire is straightforward and does not require any discussion, it is unlikely that the different modes of gathering the information would have influenced the data. Some respondents did, however, add remarks in answering one of the questions. These remarks are included in the discussion of the data in Chapter 6.

3.3.1 The respondents

The breakdown of respondents for the perceptual dialect research is given in the table and figures below.

Respondents		Age Groups				Place of Residence		Total
		13-19	20-39	40-59	>59	Urban	Rural	
IM	Male	4	10	1	1	11	5	16
Hindus (39)	Female	14	7	2	0	17	6	23
IM	Male	1	7	4	1	12	1	13
Muslims (25)	Female	7	2	2	1	12	0	12
AF (6)	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Female	3	2	0	1	6	0	6
Sino-	Male	3	1	1	0	5	0	5
Mauritians (SM) (12)	Female	5	2	0	0	7	0	7
CP/Mixed	Male	5	1	1	2	8	1	9
(18)	Female	7	1	1	0	8	1	9
Total		43	30	15	12	86	14	100

Table 3.3. Respondents by ethnicity, gender, religion, age group and place of residence (2003 fieldwork).
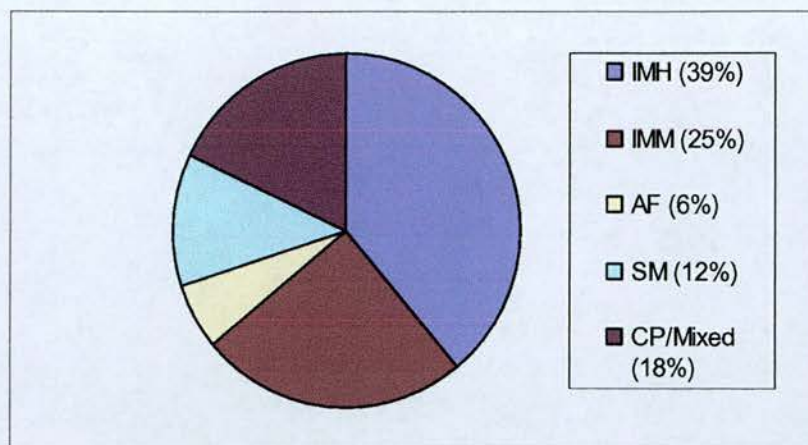
Figure 3.3. Percentage of respondents by ethnic group (2003 fieldwork).
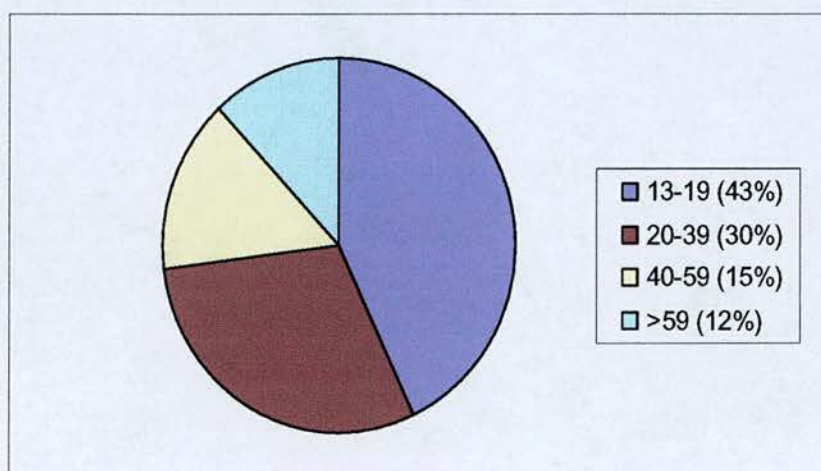
Figure 3.4. Percentage of respondents by age-group (2003 fieldwork).

3.4 Participant observation

There are a number of limitations with the methodologies described above; one of them being instances of under- and over-reporting. In any interview, respondents might feel that they are expected to give a specific answer in order to make a favourable impression. Responses, therefore, might not reflect actual fact – although the fact that interviewees decide to over-report and under-report use of some varieties is interesting in itself and reveals language beliefs. For this reason, research on language attitudes and language use cannot rely exclusively on reported views

(Parkin 1977). These reported views have to be supplemented with information on actual language use.

Furthermore, a number of authors have highlighted the problems caused by the observer's paradox (Labov 1972) to sociolinguistic studies (e.g., Wilson 1994, Cukor-Avila 2000, Hazen 2000). The interviewer and the interview situation can affect natural data. As Cukor-Avila (2000: 253) puts it, "the characteristics of the interviewer (such as gender, age, experience, social background, and race) and characteristics of the interview itself (...) may also affect the data from sociolinguistic fieldwork". To minimise the problem of the observer's paradox and to be perceived as less of an outsider, it is important for researchers to adopt an active participation in the community under investigation. Subjects can then get used to the researcher. My membership in the Mauritian society and native knowledge of Mauritian meant that I was easily accepted in the community.

My links with Mauritian culture along with participant observation, a methodology widely used in social anthropology (Eriksen 1995), have enabled me to obtain information on more naturalistic and less controlled language behaviours. These provided an important background to the study, shed further light on the complexity of the language situation in Mauritius and showed the actual manifestation of language ideologies in daily routines. Throughout the dissertation, I discuss interviewees' responses with respect to my own observation of Mauritian society.

3.5 Role-play

Role-play is a quick and effective way of obtaining information about language use (Grimshaw & Holden 1976, Sachs & Devin 1976). Also, according to Andersen (1986: 159), it is "a useful and feasible way to tap [children's] implicit knowledge of social uses of language and its appropriateness for different social roles". It also makes possible the exploration of how effectively language beliefs and behaviours are transmitted from one generation to the next. During the first phase of my fieldwork, I was also interested in gathering information about the acquisition and transmission of language ideologies in the Mauritian community. Role-play seemed a reliable method of gathering data on this issue.

The pilot observations were conducted in one primary and two pre-primary schools, all situated in urban regions. The pupil population in the two pre-primary schools were of various ethnic groups and social classes. The pupils in the primary school formed a more homogeneous group: they were mostly of Indo-Mauritian origins (90% according to one teacher) and their parents belonged mainly to the middle-class.

In the role-play trials, children aged between 3 and 7 were observed during specific situations: parents-children, grandparents-children, doctor-patient, shopkeeper-customer, teacher-pupils. A number of problems cropped up during the role-play trials.

First, it was very difficult to explain the tasks to the youngest children and get them to perform the given situations. They were easily distracted and could not focus on

the situation. On the advice of a pre-primary school teacher, I decided to focus on the 5 to 7 years of age (i.e., Standards I and II of primary school).

However, even the older children could not perform the role-play situations in a spontaneous manner in the classroom. One school-teacher pointed to the fact that in the school setting, children know that they are expected to speak French or English. Therefore, in any role-play situation performed in class, they are likely to use French and English because they have been conditioned to do so. When asked to perform the role-plays in the school-yard, the children became less conscious of these linguistic expectations and they used Mauritian more often in their performances. But I did not have the proper equipment to record them in an open setting.

After the 2002 role-play trials and discussions with some school-teachers, I realised that the methodology adopted had to be refined. Given these constraints, the novelty of this method in the Mauritian setting and time limitations, I abandoned the role-play methodology. However, I should point out that role-plays can be a valuable source of information for those interested in the transmission and acquisition of language attitudes.

3.6 A final note on methodology

Given that the individual is part of a complex network where values, traditions, sociocultural norms and physical environment interact, a thorough social research should take all these factors into consideration. However, it is difficult, if not impossible, to consider all these factors together when discussing an individual's attitudes and beliefs. Researchers have to choose which variables they deem most

relevant to the research topic (Gardner 1978, Alreck & Settle 1995, Fowler 2002). Preferring one variable over another, in no way, means that the excluded variable is of no significance to the study.

Resources are scarce and choices have to be made. I have therefore opted for a few social factors that as a native Mauritian linguist, I believe are important to the local setting. By no means do I claim that these are the only variables that could explain the differences in language usage and attitudes. I am conscious of the limitations that the lack of consideration of other factors such as gender, social networks, socio-economic class, could pose to my study. However, given the time and the resources that I had, it was not feasible to address all these issues in a single dissertation.

Furthermore, I do not claim that my findings apply to the whole Mauritian population. What I present in this study is a flavour of what things are like on the Mauritian linguistic front. I also draw some parallels between the Mauritian situation and that of other countries. Finally, given that there are various areas of Mauritian linguistics that have not been thoroughly explored yet (as indicated in the coming chapters), I also propose here some avenues for further research.

3.7 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has described the various methods that I used for the study of language use and attitudes in the Mauritian community. The various methods of data collection adopted in this study supplement each other and provide us with different perspectives on the same issue – linguistic practices and ideologies. Through triangulation – i.e., the "multiple employment of methodologies, theories, data

sources, or investigators in the conduct of an empirical inquiry" (DuFon 2001: 251) –
I wanted to make my findings more compelling and provide a comprehensive view
of the linguistic situation of Mauritius.

Furthermore, the use of such methods as perceptual dialect maps and role-play in
Mauritius was particularly challenging in that these had never been used on the
island before. By highlighting the benefits of these techniques and some of the
problems encountered with them (section 3.5 above, also Chapter 6), this study
therefore sets the basis for further work on and with these methodologies in the
Mauritian context.

Having described the aims of this study, the social background of Mauritius and the
methods used, we can move on to discuss the data collected during the fieldwork.
We first consider attitudes to, and use of, Mauritian as a written language.

Chapter Four

Writing Mauritian

4.0 Introduction[5]

In this chapter, I discuss respondents' use of written Mauritian and their attitudes to literacy in Mauritian. In the first section, I briefly describe the orthographies proposed for Mauritian and show how the choice of orthography reflects language ideologies. I then describe literacy levels among the interviewees. In the third section, I discuss literacy in Mauritian and the type of spelling system used when writing Mauritian. Attitudes to the promotion of literacy in Mauritian are analysed in the following section. I then examine what the preferred standard form for Mauritian is. The written domains of use of Mauritian are explored in the next section. On the basis of these findings, a simple model showing the connection between written means of communication, use of Mauritian and formality is devised. In the penultimate section, I show that there is no obvious link between the ability and willingness to write Mauritian and ethnicity. Finally, I conclude with a brief summary.

4.1 Background

As I write this dissertation, a committee of linguists from the University of Mauritius and the Mauritius Institute of Education is working on recommendations for the official standardisation of Mauritian. The committee was set up in March 2004 at the request of the Government of Mauritius. Their report will be made available to the

Government and the public in late 2004 (refer to Note 2). Since work on the report has only just started and it will take some time before the official standard is actually accepted and promoted, we will at this stage assume that there is no officially recognised standard for Mauritian.

Evidence of written Mauritian can be found as early as the 18th century (Baker, personal communication). A major contribution to the domain of writing came in 1888 when Charles Baissac, a linguist and folklorist, published a collection of folk tales in Mauritian. The orthography that he chose "endeavoured to show both derivation and pronunciation" (Baker 1972: 51). Thus, Baissac's orthography emphasised the link between French and Mauritian and attempted to show that the latter was a derivative of the former. However, in the late 19th century, Mauritian was not extensively used as a written medium and did not have a set spelling system (Baker 1972). Even today, many Mauritians think that the language has no standard orthography in spite of the fact that dictionaries are available (e.g., Baker & Hookoomsing 1987, Ledikasyon Pu Travayer 1989). Since the 19th century, therefore, the spelling system of Mauritian has been characterised by variability.

In an attempt to promote consistency, Dev Virahsawmy, an ex-politician with a grounding in linguistics, proposed the *grafi riptir* (literally, "orthography of rupture") in 1967. He publicised this orthography in newspaper articles. Virahsawmy passionately argued that Mauritian orthography had to be as distinct as possible from French, i.e., there had to be a "rupture" between the French orthography and the Mauritian one, a rupture from past colonisation. Explicit in this argument is the idea

that Mauritian is not a corrupt variety of French, but a distinct language in its own right. As a legitimate language, it should, therefore, have its own characteristic spelling system. A system based on phonemic principles and divergent from the French orthography was proposed. Virahsawmy's aim was to "give a psychological shock to Mauritians so that they realise that Mauritian is a language and a tool for the construction of a nation"[6] (1988:1). He devised new diacritics and graphemes such as <â, ã, ē>. In so doing, he violated some of the social goals for the creation of an orthography and the *grafi riptir* was not accepted by the population.

According to Pike (1947: 208-213), an ideal orthography should satisfy a number of phonemic and social criteria. For example, it should

1. have a "one-to-one correspondence between each phoneme and the symbolization of that phoneme";

2. have an "adequate representation of words borrowed from other languages";

3. be "acceptable to the people of the region where it is introduced";

4. avoid "strange letters" and "diacritic marks";

5. contain symbols that are easy to print;

6. "represent insofar as possible a wide area", that is, different dialects.

Constraint (5) is not an important issue nowadays with the availability of computers (Baker 1997b). Computers, unlike typewriters, allow for a wide range of symbols. But the point remains that there are several constraints in creating an orthography. Language planners face the challenge of devising an orthography that has "an acceptable balance between phonemic principles and general sociological situations" (Pike 1947: 208).

Using Pike's criteria as background, we can see why the *grafi riptir* was not accepted by Mauritians. Virahsawmy had not struck the right balance between phonemic and social criteria. He had added "strange letters" and diacritic marks which were alien to the population. But the introduction of those new symbols which made the writing system heavy and unconventional enabled Virahsawmy to express his language ideologies. The originality of the system highlighted the differences between Mauritian and French and turned the former into a legitimate, authentic and full-fledged language. As Jaffe (2000: 503) puts it,

> For creoles, minority languages and stigmatized language varieties, orthographic differentiation from standard and/or 'dominant' codes serves to combat the common perceptions of these codes as deficient variants of standard languages.

But the final outcome of this initiative was the production a writing system that could not easily be printed and made the transfer from Mauritian to French difficult. As could be expected, these spelling conventions proved unpopular and were never adopted (Baker 1972). Mauritian was still written using variable conventions, as shown in the extract below.

> Some Mauritians write in full French term [*sic*] from which they assume the Kreol form to be derived, even adding inflected endings (especially plural endings) which have no significance in Kreol. Others make some attempt to reconcile phonetic realities with the limitations of current French orthography.
>
> Baker (1972: 52)

A few years later, Philip Baker, the first person to write a comprehensive description of Mauritian, proposed a writing system for the language. His work *Kreol: A description of Mauritian Creole*, published in 1972, includes a practical orthography for Mauritian. He put forward a list of 21 symbols representing consonants, vowels

and approximants. Nasalised sounds, common in Mauritian, were indicated by the letter <h>. For instance, following this orthography "ah" would correspond to French "an". Baker later revised his orthography and replaced the nasaliser <h> with <m> or <n> (Baker & Hookoomsing 1987). However, Baker's orthography has not gained wide acceptance among Mauritians and is not used in the community.

At around the same time, the group Ledikasyon Pu Travayer (LPT) got actively involved in the promotion of literacy in Mauritian. They have put forward their own spelling system which is actively used in their literacy campaigns. They have also published a number of articles in Mauritian. Their system is based on phonemic principles. Nasalisation is represented by the addition of the letter <n>. LPT's spelling system has fared better than the system proposed by Baker, for instance, because it is used in literacy classes for the working classes and in their publications (Ah Vee, personal communication, interview in 2003). However, it is not widely used among other members of the general public.

In 1985, Virahsawmy came back to the forefront and proposed another orthography: *graphie d'accueil*. He believed that the 1967 orthography had to be changed as Mauritian was increasingly becoming the instrument of "pluricultural mauricianism" (*L'Express* 4 April 1985). The symbols <c,h,q,x> absent in the 1967 orthography were introduced in the *graphie d'accueil*. Although the descriptor was French, this spelling system still diverged significantly from French and was alien to the local population. Virahsawmy therefore had to modify his spelling system again in order to make it socially acceptable. In the 1990s, he proposed yet another orthrography. In

designing this new spelling system, he abandoned some of the least popular diacritics and graphemes. The unfamiliar new symbols were removed in favour of a "simpler, more practical and economic system that is easy to teach" (*un système plus simple, plus pratique et plus économique qui est facile à enseigner* – Fabien *et al.* 2002). Virahsawmy therefore has had to accommodate to the needs of the population and modify his proposal. Thus, an unusual orthography was abandoned in favour of one that would be perceived as being more transparent. This new orthography can be seen as an attempt to strike "an acceptable balance between phonemic principles and general sociological situations" (Pike 1947: 208).

Although the recent orthography put forward by Virahsawmy has not been accepted by all Mauritians, it is used and recognised as the standard orthography of Mauritian by some groups. The Church and advertisement companies have also adopted this orthography. The Gospel of St Mark, for instance, has recently been translated into Mauritian using this new orthography. The Church is actively promoting an orthography for Mauritian[7]. The Church's promotion of literacy in Mauritian ties in well with the missionary tradition of developing orthographies for indigenous languages and promoting literacy in these varieties (Le Page 1997). Each issue of the popular weekly Christian publication *La Vie Catholique* includes a lesson on Mauritian spelling. Father Chung, the editor of this newspaper interviewed in 2003, is currently involved in the translation of religious texts into Mauritian. It is possible that once the language is extensively used both as an oral and written means of communication within such an important, sacred and prestigious domain as the Church, it might be more readily accepted in other spheres.

Today, Dev Virahsawmy and the Church work in collaboration for the promotion of literacy in Mauritian and a standard form of Mauritian (*L'Express*, 15 May 1999). The writing system used is referred to as *grafi linite* (the orthography of unity). Virahsawmy also calls this orthography *grafi diocèse de Port-Louis/Dev Virahsawmy* (*Le Mauricien*, 5 March 2004). For him, it is important for the language to have the backing of an institution, that is, for it to be "validated and legitimised in some way by some authority or authorities" (Milroy & Milroy 1991: 23). The support of the largely "francophone and francophile" Church (Father Fanchette, interview 2003) for spoken and written Mauritian adds prestige to the variety and legitimises its position as a language. Mauritian gains credibility as a language because it is recognised and used by an important and respected institution. Since the support of the Church for Mauritian is a relatively new phenomenon (1990s), it is difficult to give an accurate assessment of its impact on local language beliefs. There is one danger involved in the Church's backing of Mauritian: it could lead to the association of the language with the Mauritian Christians, rather than the Mauritian nation as a whole. We discuss this point in Chapter 7 where we discuss ownership of Mauritian.

It should be noted that Virahsawmy (personal communication, interview in 2002) argues that there are some minor differences between *grafi linite* and LPT standard. Both groups (the Church/Virahsawmy and LPT) are willing to compromise in order to come up with a single standard. Theoretically, therefore, there does exist a standard Mauritian orthography (in fact, there are two written standards: *grafi linite* and LPT orthography). In practice, however, the orthography adopted by many

Mauritians is still a matter of personal preference and possibly, language beliefs and attitudes.

Here is an illustration of some of the ways in which the sentence "I love you" could be written:

- *Mo kontan twa*

This is the phonemic orthography that is used by Virahsawmy and is also, currently being promoted. As can be seen, it diverges from the French spelling system. In this orthography, the graphemes <k,w,z> are commonly used. For instance, <k> replaces the <c> in French words (*kontan* v/s *content*), <wa> is used instead of <oi> (*twa* v/s *toi*). These graphemes give a distinctly different touch to the Mauritian orthography. In other words, it indexes Mauritian identity by obscuring the French origins of the words and highlighting their uniqueness. Also, there are no silent letters or other redundant graphemes or symbols. The phonemic orthography favours economy and simplicity – two important criteria for the creation of a writing system (Pike 1947)

- *Mo konten toi*

This is a hybrid orthography with a mixture of the phonemic writing system and the French one. It employs some of the features used in the above example, e.g., the use of <k>, while maintaining some French influence, e.g, *toi* instead of *twa*.

- *Mo content toi*

This example is a close approximation to French. The words *content* and *toi* are spelt in exactly the same way as their French counterparts. Note that the final <t> is included in *content* although it is not pronounced. This orthographic system implies two things more or less directly. First, it illustrates how consistency is maintained

between the "Mauritian orthography" and the French one. Second, it maintains the traditional linguistic hierarchy and further establishes Mauritian as a derivative or an inferior form of French. This is an etymological orthography.

It is worth pointing out that all the spelling systems proposed for Mauritian made use of the Roman script. A variety of scripts are present in the Mauritian linguistic landscape. Languages like Hindi are written in the Devanagari script, some are in the Arabic script (e.g., Urdu and Arabic), others in the Chinese script (e.g., Mandarin and Hakka). English and French are the main languages written in the Roman script. In theory, therefore, a number of scripts could have been chosen for the writing of Mauritian. The standardisation of languages such Turkish and Bahasa Malaysia (Wellish 1978) illustrates the fact that even the script adopted for a language can be a controversial matter charged with ideological meaning. Turkish, for instance, was written in the Arabic script till 1928 when the Roman script replaced the Arabic one (Wellish 1978). These changes were not arbitrary but coincided with major socio-political revolutions in the country. Until 1923, Turkey was an Islamic state where the Shariah, the Islamic code of conduct, prevailed. The national language was then written in the Arabic script. Because this language is used in the Quran, it becomes iconic of Islamic values and principles. While the Arabic script was seen as an important symbol of Islamic loyalty in Turkey, the Roman one epitomised orientation to Western values and secularism. The change from an Islamic state to a secular one is therefore also expressed by the Romanisation of Turkish. In fact, "Secularization and Westernization of Turkish life meant for Kemal [the first secular president], above all, the discarding of the Arabic script" (Wellish 1978: 55). In

Mauritius, however, it appears that nobody has questioned the use of a Roman script for Mauritian. There seems to be a tacit agreement between the policy-makers and the general public that Mauritian should be written in the Roman script. Therefore, Mauritian orthography, like most orthographies designed in the last hundred years (Baker 1997b), makes use of the Roman alphabet. It is clearly the actual spelling used that is the subject of controversy.

That the choice of a given orthography reflects language beliefs and attitudes has been suggested in the literature (e.g., Fishman 1972b, Jaffe 2000, Miethaner 2000, Johnson 2002). The choice of the "best" orthography is not a simple ideologically neutral decision. In fact, it is often a matter of controversy and sometimes even heated political debates (e.g., the papers in Tabouret-Keller *et al.* (eds.) 1997). Taiwanese, for instance, can be written in various scripts: Han, Han-Roman and Roman only (Chiung 2001). It is therefore in a situation of digraphia with the H script being Han and the L script being the Roman one. Chiung (2001) conducted a study to assess attitudes towards the various writing systems among 244 college and university students. The general preference for Han-only writing system over the Han-Roman and Roman-only ones was observed. The Roman script was generally associated with foreign cultures and languages; consequently, respondents could not identify with this writing system. Chiung argues that the choice of spelling conventions is not ideologically neutral and places the debate about writing system in the country's larger socio-economic and political picture. The Taiwanese example illustrates how the choice of a given orthography can reflect prevailing language

attitudes and be tied to conceptions of identity. As Le Page (1997: 11) puts it, there is a "political symbolism attached to rival orthographies".

Furthermore, the way creoles are standardised can reflect a bias towards these languages, which are seen as inferior to, and dependent on, their lexifiers (Alleyne 1994, Schieffelin & Doucet 1998, Sebba 2000). For instance, Haitian Creole (HC or *Kreyòl*), a French-lexified creole, is the official language of Haiti. Different orthographies have been proposed for HC and the choice of orthographic conventions has been the subject of national debates. Although proponents of the different spelling systems claim that their choice reflects some practical considerations – such as promotion of literacy, or a phonemic and economic orthography – they are, in fact, expressing language beliefs. Indeed, as Haitians negotiate their identity as a nation, the way in which HC is codified can suggest who counts as "us" and who counts as "them". The pro-phonemic approach, for instance, distinguishes the HC orthography from the French one. Proponents of this approach make it clear that HC is different from French and exists as a language in its own right; thus breaking away from colonial traditions – this approach is in line with the one adopted by Virahsawmy in the 1960s. This orthography is an index of Haitian identity. In contrast, the pro-etymological/ anti-phonemic perspective underlines the similarity between French and HC, suggesting the dependence of the latter on the former and reinforcing the view that creoles are inferior to, or broken versions of, their lexifiers. The third approach is a combination of the 2 previous ones, i.e., "a phonemic orthography but with some concessions to French spelling" (Schieffelin & Doucet 1998: 295). These debates can, therefore, be seen to reveal "the complexity and the ambivalence of cultural definitions of Haitianness" (1998: 305).

A similar case is that of Sranan, an English-lexified creole spoken in Surinam. Dutch and Sranan exist in a diglossic situation where the former is the H variety and the latter the L one. Although Sranan has two official orthographies (the 1960 one which was revised in 1986), it is actually written using conventions derived from either Dutch or other languages. People in Surinam are literate mostly in Dutch. This is reflected in the fact that many people write Sranan using Dutch spelling conventions (Sebba 2000: 929). However, there are some people who argue that the idiosyncrasies of the Dutch spelling system should be eliminated in favour of a more "international" (Sebba 2000: 937) orthography. This is also an anticolonial move. Sebba (2000: 925) echoes Schieffelin & Doucet (1998) when he argues that "orthographies are less shaped by the phonological facts of the language concerned than by social and cultural factors in the context where the orthography is used". The examples of Sranan and HC both show that phonology, simplicity or economy are not the only motivations for choosing a specific writing system. Cultural factors and language ideologies can in fact be more important factors in determining which orthography will be adopted by a population. They illustrate Jaffe's (2000: 500) point that different orthographies "symbolize, naturalize and legitimize differences and/or similarities of a cultural or political origin". It is clear that orthographic choice is part of the larger socio-political picture and reveals ideologies of power.

Therefore, given that the choice of orthographies reflects language ideologies prevalent in a community, the question "who writes Mauritian and how?" has to be given due importance in a study of language attitudes in Mauritius. Interviews

conducted in Mauritius contained some questions related to writing in Mauritian. The findings for these questions are presented and discussed in the sections below.

4.2 Literacy among the interviewees

The 2000 Population Census shows that 14.4% of the Mauritian population are illiterate, that is, "cannot read or write a simple sentence in any language" (Central Statistical Office 2000). The highest degree of illiteracy is found among Mauritians aged 60 and above, with women and village-dwellers being generally less literate that men and urban-dwellers, respectively. This important degree of illiteracy can be attributed to restricted access to education and limited exposure to urban life.

As the interviewees in my corpus are from a range of age groups and social backgrounds, their level of education and exposure to city life vary considerably. While some of the interviewees have completed postgraduate studies, others have never had the opportunity to go to school or work outside their home. The table and figure below give the breakdown of interviewees in terms of gender and literacy.

From Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1, it can be seen that 5 % of the interviewees are illiterate. Women show the higher rate of illiteracy: 7% compared to only 3% for men. All the interviewees who claim to be illiterate have not had access to education, are from a working-class background and are aged 40 and above. My interviewees fare better than the rest of the population. Indeed, this group shows higher literacy rates than the average national one and is therefore not representative of the national literacy situation.

Interviewees	Illiterate	Literate	Total
Males	1	38	39
Females	3	37	40
Total	4	75	79

Table 4.1. Respondents by gender and literacy.
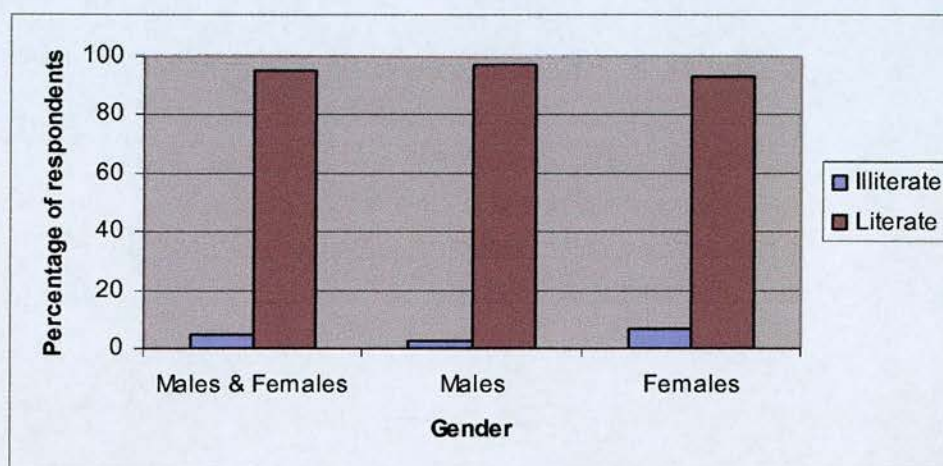
Figure 4.1. Literacy rates among respondents.

4.3 Literacy in Mauritian

Judging by the long absence of any governmental policies for the teaching of Mauritian[8], one could say that literacy in Mauritian has not been a major official issue on the island for a long time. The aim of the school system is to develop literacy in French, English and in some cases, oriental languages, but not in Mauritian. Therefore, it is conceivable to find Mauritians who claim to be literate but who also specify being illiterate in Mauritian. As Mauritian is not taught in school and does not have any widely accepted orthography, some Mauritians do not, in effect, feel comfortable writing it. Others, however, do use it for writing. The orthography used in these cases can vary significantly. A literacy campaign in Mauritian has recently been launched by the group LPT. Their aim is to promote

literacy in Mauritian among adults from the working-classes. At the end of the teaching programme, those adults would have acquired basic literacy – the "ability to read and write in one's language and to do simple arithmetic" (Gerbault 1997: 143) in Mauritian. For most Mauritians, however, the situation is different: literacy in Mauritian is not acquired through any formal teaching programme. The writing system is created in an ad hoc manner. It can also be considered as a by-product of literacy in French in that literacy in the lexifier language automatically implies literacy in Mauritian.

Given this complex situation, interviewees were asked three main questions regarding the writing of Mauritian:

1. whether or not they write Mauritian

2. what kind of spelling system they use for writing Mauritian

3. whether or not literacy in Mauritian should be promoted.

The responses vary, as will be shown below.

4.4 Writing Mauritian

The first relevant question put forward was whether or not the interviewee writes Mauritian. This seemingly straightforward question proved to be problematic in that interviewees interpreted "writing Mauritian" differently. Many respondents categorically replied that they never wrote Mauritian. Some of the young respondents specified that they do not generally use Mauritian in written interactions, except for emails and texts. Text messaging and emailing are gaining popularity on the island, especially among young people[9]. In June 2003, the number of mobile phone subscribers was estimated to be 400,465 – a third of the total population (National

Computer Board 2004). In 2002, there were 180,000 internet users in Mauritius. Because texting and emailing are popular in the Mauritian community and involve writing, it is reasonable to say that they should count as domains of written communication.

However, after carrying out some interviewees, I realised that for some people, text messaging and emailing do not count as written domains. Because of their divergence from the prototypical written domain, these new means of written communication – texts and emails – do not seem to constitute 'proper' writing. This illustrates how domains of written use can be understood differently by different interviewees.

Those young interviewees who spontaneously asserted not writing Mauritian were then asked whether they did not use the language in texting and emailing either. Many interviewees then specified that they did actually use Mauritian for writing emails and text messages:

Ex 4.1 ehn oui, pu teks ek email (Hyder, 20-39, IMM)
      oh yes, for texts and emails
Ex 4.2 me nek pu teks ek email (Gallina, 20-39, IMH)
      but only for texts and emails

In this discussion, texts and emails will be considered as domains of written use. Therefore, interviewees who state using Mauritian only in texts and emails are included with those who use Mauritian for writing generally. In the table below, responses are compiled in terms of interviewees' age group, gender and use of Mauritian in writing.

Interviewees		Write Mauritian			Total
		Yes	No	No response	
<13 yrs	M	0	2	0	2
of age	F	0	2	0	2
13-19	M	2	4	1	7
	F	4	2	0	6
20-39	M	10	6	0	16
	F	7	4	0	11
40-59	M	4	6	0	10
	F	0	9	0	9
>59	M	1	2	0	3
	F	1	7	1	9
Total		29	44	2	75

Table 4.2. Literate respondents by age-group, gender and use of Mauritian in written interactions.
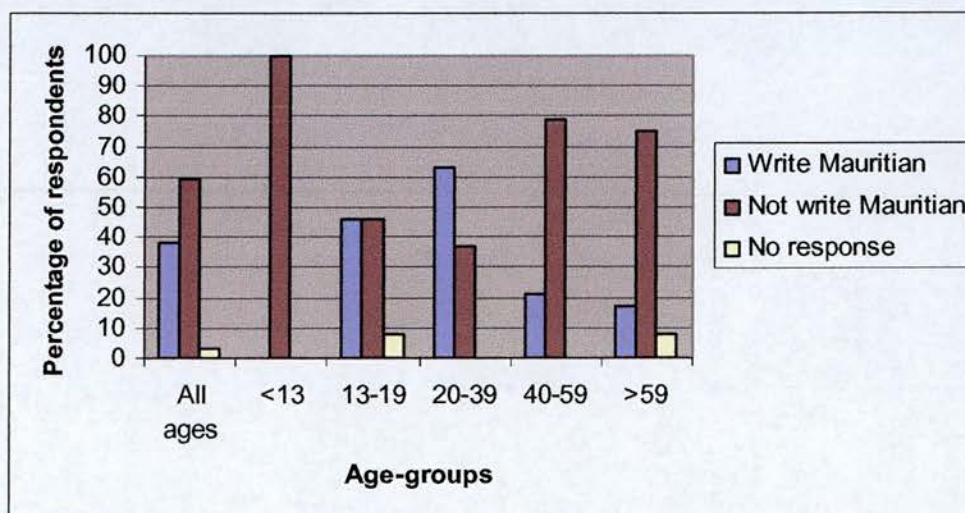
Figure 4.2. Percentage of literate respondents by age-group and use of Mauritian in written interactions.

Figure 4.2 shows that 38% of the literate interviewees claim that they write

Mauritian. This figure also includes those who claim using Mauritian only in text

messages or very rarely. Had text messaging been excluded as a written domain of communication, we would have expected a percentage much lower than 38%. Only around 10 interviewees use Mauritian in writings <u>other than</u> text messages or emails. Use of Mauritian in written interactions is therefore not widespread in this corpus.

The highest proportion of those who write Mauritian is found in the age-group 20-39: 63%. Twelve out of the 17 interviewees who write Mauritian, claim to do so only in text messages, emails, chats or even very rarely. The remaining five either use the language "sometimes" or "often". One of the interviewees, in his early thirties, writes songs and short stories in Mauritian. He is the only person in the whole corpus who writes Mauritian so extensively.

Written Mauritian, therefore, seems to be associated with texts/emails and also youth. For instance, half of those who write Mauritian in the teenage group explicitly say that they do so only in text messages and/or emails. Mira (13-19, IMH), for example, states that she uses Mauritian only in text messages. For her, Mauritian is a beautiful oral language, but it should not be written:

Ex 4.3 I do not write in Creole. It cannot be written. There is a lot of confusion because of the different ways of writing it. I use it sometimes for sms.

The presence of several orthographies acts as a barrier to the use of Mauritian in written domains. There is a dissociation between literacy and Mauritian. Mira seems to think that it is impossible to be literate in her native language which simply cannot be written. The paragraphs below, which discuss the responses of those aged less than 13 and above 40, further show the importance of text messages and emails in the promotion of Mauritian as a written language.

None of those aged less than 13 write Mauritian. The youngest interviewees are mostly from working-class and lower middle-class backgrounds. They are less likely to have access to mobile phones and emails. Other domains where they could write Mauritian would include letters to friends/relatives, story-writing or other kinds of simple writing exercises. As mentioned above, at this age, children are being taught how to write French, English and in some cases, an Asian language. But they are not taught how to write Mauritian. It could be said that at this young age, children have not sufficiently developed their creative skills in order to create their own way of writing Mauritian. According to two of my older teenage interviewees, writing Mauritian involves the use of one's imagination as in the current absence of a widely accepted norm, one has to "invent" a writing system for the language (e.g., Sabah, 13-19, IMM). It is therefore possible that my youngest respondents prefer limiting themselves to the formally taught written languages instead of devising their own way of writing Mauritian.

Nineteen percent of those aged 40 and above (40-59 and >59 age-groups) declare that they write Mauritian. Since writing Mauritian is a relatively recent phenomenon that has especially gained grounds with the advent of text messaging and emailing, it is not surprising to find that few of the interviewees aged 40 and above write Mauritian. Thirteen interviewees in the two oldest groups claim that it is difficult to write and even read Mauritian. Two respondents further state that they have never been taught how to write the language. Because they do not "know" how to write Mauritian, many of the oldest interviewees prefer using French or in a few cases, English, in their written interactions. These views, it could be argued, reflect neither

a positive attitude nor a negative one towards the use of Mauritian in written interactions. They only highlight some people's belief that since they have not been taught the language, they simply cannot write it. For them, it seems a straightforward matter of fact that invokes neither support nor condemnation.

However, some interviewees aged 40 and above clearly express some negative attitudes to Mauritian in this seemingly neutral yes-no question. For instance, when asked whether he writes Mauritian, Ram (40-59, IMH) is taken aback. He exclaims that he does not do so because Mauritian writing does not exist:

Ex 4.4 lekritir kreol pa existe.
        Creole writing does not exist.

From Ram's perspective, therefore, he cannot write a variety whose written form does not even exist. He goes on to argue that given that Mauritian is a dialect and not a proper language, it does not have a standard; therefore, it cannot and should not be written. We see here the role of standardisation in giving authority and legitimacy to a language (more on authority, legitimacy and standardisation in Chapter 6).There are more instances where the interviewees declare that Mauritian cannot and should not be written because it is not a proper language. The comparison is often made with French which, like any other "proper" language, has a standard orthography to which everybody has to adhere:

Ex 4.5 Kreol pa kuma fransé ki éna en sel fason ékrir. (Ram, 40-59, IMH)
        Creole is not like French which has only one spelling system.

Variability is perceived negatively. The above extract also underlines the "inferiority" of Mauritian with respect to its lexifier language. French is seen as having a norm while Mauritian has no single norm. This celebration of normativity reinforces the current social and linguistic hierarchies existing in Mauritius. The lack

of a single authoritative standard for Mauritian is treated as a manifestation of its uncontrolled and variable nature. And this lack of control and stability in the orthographic domain seems to map onto other perceptions of Mauritian as a variety lacking power and authority in social interactions. French, and by extension its speakers, indexes socio-economic power while Mauritian indexes lack of power. Thus, the orthographies acquire indexical values and hence, social meaning.

The literature shows that standardisation plays a crucial role in enhancing the status of a variety (e.g., Fasold 1984, Joseph 1987, Milroy & Milroy 1991, Mugglestone 1995). However, in the examples just cited above, there is no guarantee that standardisation would enhance the status of the language. In fact, standardisation might not influence attitudes to Mauritian significantly. Because Mauritian is perceived as a dialect or a broken variety of French by many, standardising the variety might not be taken seriously and might not rid the variety of some of its firmly rooted negative attributes. It would be reasonable to argue that for some interviewees, even if Mauritian had a generally accepted orthography, they would not have used the "dialect" for writing. They would opt for "better" varieties in written interactions. Thus, even if the variety is standardised, the medium itself can still be seen as a variant of French, triggering the negative attitudes associated with variation discussed above.

From this small sample, it can be seen that Mauritian is not yet accepted as a written language. As some people feel that Mauritian is only a dialect or a broken language, they cannot envisage using it in written interactions. However, in coming years, its use in written communications might become more extensive among the older age-

groups (as those aged less than 40 grow older and join the older generations) and mobile phones and internet access become more widespread. We can therefore expect the use of written Mauritian to increase over the next decades.

Furthermore, the above paragraphs clearly show that technology has a vital role to play in the promotion of written Mauritian. Text messages have to be kept short because of the character limit imposed and also, the minute keyboard which makes typing difficult and tedious. It is, therefore, common practice to abbreviate words or use symbols in text messages. For instance, "you are" is usually written as "u r". Not only does this way of writing save space, but it also saves time and hence, is more convenient. Text message writers, therefore, make use of their imagination when writing on their mobile phones. Adhesion to the standard is not the norm in text messages. In fact, users have to find ways to shorten standard words. Since Mauritian has no standard orthography (or rather, is thought not to have one), it is up to writers to create their own Mauritian spelling system. Mauritian, it could be claimed, is an ideal language for text messaging: users can converge on novel codes while texting without ever having to refer to a standard. That is, they are not conditioned by a standard form of the language, they can just create the language on the spot. Nineteen year-old Sabah, for example, clearly states that she likes texting in Mauritian because it enables her to use her imagination. She does not have to think of the standard form of the words first and then translate into a text message code, but can write her text messages in whichever way she likes straightaway.

Emailing differs from texting in that writers do not have to limit their message to a given space and use a small keyboard. In this sense then, emails are closer to paper letters than to text messages. However, like sms, emails tend to be informal (Baron 1998). Although emails are not mentioned as a domain of use of Mauritian as often as text messages are, they nevertheless clearly constitute an emerging sphere where the language is used in this sample. Whether in text messages, emails or chats, Mauritian offers the writer the convenience of a non-standard language which can be written in various creative ways. Recent literature has highlighted how written language is creatively adapted to meet the space, time and effort constraints of computer-mediated communication (CMC) and also how through CMC, new varieties of a language and new identities evolve (Collot & Belmore 1996, Yates 1996, Snyder 1998, Baron 2000). This means of communication is linked with language creativity, fluidity and evolving identities. The use of (non-standard and variable forms of) Mauritian, therefore, emphasises the hybrid status of CMC and the creativity associated with this mode of communication.

On the basis of the above paragraphs, therefore, we could claim that writing in Mauritian is a recent phenomenon in that the language is used in written interactions by young people mostly. The older age-groups find it improper or too difficult to write Mauritian. That written Mauritian is an emerging trend can also be seen in the fact that the language is mostly used in the new written forms of communication: text messaging and emails. In this corpus, therefore, Mauritian is mainly a written language for the young generations and is used for new forms of communication.

4.5 How is Mauritian written?

Respondents who did write Mauritian were also asked how they wrote it (DQ 10, Appendix I). Some respondents needed prompting for this question. This could suggest that respondents do not actively think about the way they write Mauritian. It could be that choice of orthography is a subconscious decision.

To help interviewees talk about their orthographic choice, I asked them whether they used a spelling system with <k,w,z> (i.e., the phonemic writing system), one closely resembling the French orthography (i.e., an etymological orthography) or an altogether different one. The responses of the 29 interviewees literate in Mauritian are given in the table below.

Write Mauritian		Orthography			
		Phonemic	Etymological	Mixed	No response
13-19	M	1	0	1	0
	F	2	1	1	0
20-39	M	5	3	0	2
	F	4	3	0	0
40-59	M	0	2	0	2
	F	0	0	0	0
>59	M	0	1	0	0
	F	1	0	0	0
Total (29)		13	10	2	4

Table 4.3. Respondents by age-group, gender and orthography used.
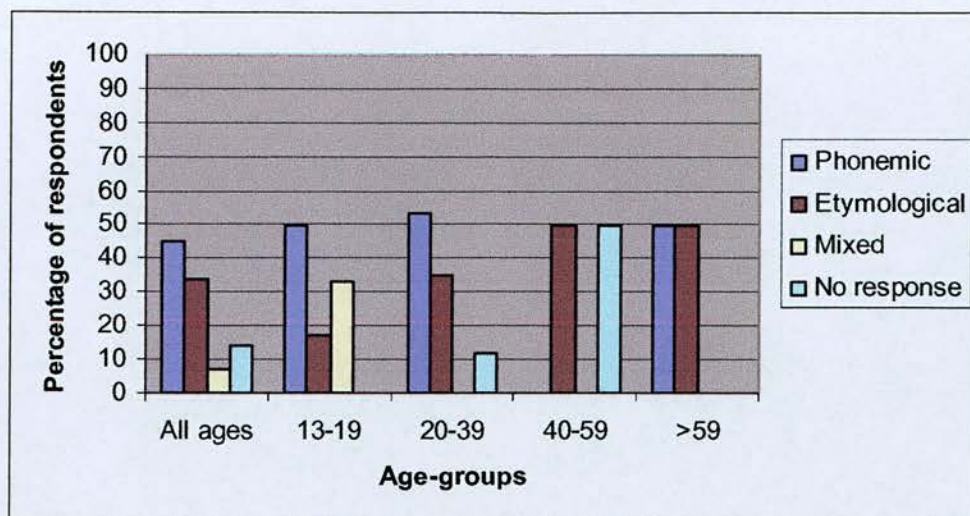
Figure 4.3. Percentage of respondents by age-group and orthography used.

Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3 show that in this corpus, the phonemic spelling system is more popular than the etymological one. Forty-five percent of interviewees literate in Mauritian claim to use a phonemic spelling system for the language as opposed to 34% who use an etymological spelling system. A mixed orthographic system combining the phonemic spelling system with French spelling conventions is not a common option among my interviewees: only 7% of interviewees literate in Mauritian use a hybrid writing system for the language. Thus, most of the respondents in Table 4.3 above have a fixed way of writing Mauritian, i.e., they have their own single regular "standard". Respondents create a regularised system by themselves. This consistent approach empowers and legitimises the language because as Jaffe (2000: 506) points out, "inconsistent usage of non-standard orthographies undermines the non-standard language's claims for linguistic parity with dominant codes". Regularised norms, therefore, add to the stability of the language and enhance its status with respect to other stable codes.

There are two main reasons why the interviewees choose the phonemic writing system:

1. convenience

2. identity

In section 4.1, we have seen that the phonemic writing system enables the user to do away with the idiosyncrasies of the French orthography in favour of an easier and less cumbersome writing system. It is also more convenient to use a phonemic system when writing messages on a mobile phone: it saves time, effort and space.

Three of the 29 interviewees in Table 4.3 state that the phonemic way of writing Mauritian is, as one respondent puts it, "the essence of Creole" (Sabah, 13-19, IMM). Rehaz and Hyder, for instance, say that they write Mauritian in the Creole way – that is, as it should be written.

Ex 4.6 Mo ekrir kreol mem (Rehaz, 20-39, IMM).
    I write Creole itself.

Ex 4.7 Mo ekrir kreol kreol (Hyder, 20-39, IMM).
    I write a creole form of Creole.

This *kreol* spelling system shows maximal deviation from French and as such, acts as a powerful tool for distancing Mauritian from French. In other words, not only is Mauritian distinct from French orally, but it also has an exclusive writing system. Some of the ideologies associated with this *kreol* writing system are similar to those put forward by the proponents of the pro-phonemic orthography for Haitian Creole and Virahsawmy with regards to his *grafi riptir* (section 4.1 above). The choice of orthography clearly becomes "a tool" (Virahsawmy 1988: 1) for the construction of a Mauritian identity. Even though some of the older respondents also write Mauritian

in the "Creole" way, none of them claim to do so for identificatory purposes. They attribute the use of the phonemic system to convenience.

While the letters <k,w,z> can be considered as an index of creoleness and therefore, a symbol of a distinct Mauritian identity, they are also thought of as the "modern" way of spelling Mauritian words. Raymond, a Franco-Mauritian aged between 40-59, says that he writes Mauritian in a "French" way because he finds the "modern" spelling system difficult.

Ex 4.8 J'écris un créole francisé(...) je trouve le Créole moderne trop difficile.
I write a "frenchified" creole (...) I find the modern Creole too difficult.

He describes the phonemic spelling as "modern" and "difficult". These spelling conventions could indeed be described as modern because they have only recently gained importance and for instance, been recently adopted by advertising companies. The modernity of this phonemic orthography could explain why it is perceived as difficult: it is modern and new because it is different from the orthography of French and many Mauritians have simply not had time to fully master this system yet. On the basis of Raymond's statement, the "French" way of writing Mauritian could be qualified as "older", or at least, "not modern". The fact that interviewees aged less than forty tend to favour the phonemic writing system further illustrates the possible outmoded nature of the etymological orthography.

Most of the 10 interviewees who use the etymological orthography argue doing so mostly for comprehension purposes. Eric (20-39, FM) claims that he uses an "easy

Creole" (*un Créole facile*). For him, the easy Creole is written using the spelling conventions of the French language:

Ex 4.9 J'écris le Créole à ma façon(...)J'utilise l'orthographe française. C'est plus facile, plus facile à lire (...) Il faut garder l'orthographe simple. Il faut que ça soit facile à lire.
I write Creole in my own way (...) I use the French orthography. It's easier, easier to read (...) The orthography has to be kept simple. It must be easy to read.

Eric maintains that the orthography of Mauritian has to be kept simple and readable. According to him, the phonemic writing system is too complex and makes reading and writing the language difficult. Also, compared to the etymological orthography, the phonemic one is new and hence, unfamiliar. Indeed, the novelty of the latter system makes it foreign to Mauritians literate in French. None of the users of the etymological orthography justifies their orthographic choice in terms of a need to express a distinct identity. Therefore, this orthography does not act as an index of a Mauritian-French identity, or any other identity for that matter. Comprehension, user-friendliness and simplicity are the only reasons mentioned to explain their orthography preference.

Furthermore, some interviewees state that they have changed the way they write Mauritian over the short time that they have had exposure to the written language. Simla, Verena and Vimal, for instance, all aged between 20-39, claim that they started off writing Mauritian in an etymological way, but are now consistently modifying this orthography in favour of a more phonemic one. Their reason for doing so is that the phonemic way is an easier way of writing Mauritian – this can be contrasted to Raymond and Eric's views in the paragraphs above. We, therefore,

have contradictory statements among the interviewees: while some claim that the etymological system is the easiest way of writing Mauritian, others maintain that the phonemic way is the simplest way of spelling Mauritian words. In fact, the respondent Hyder finds the phonemic orthography so convenient and easy that he uses the "Mauritian spelling" when he sends messages in French on his mobile (*mem franse vin kreol dan sms* – even French becomes Mauritian in text messages)!

Therefore, choosing a writing system is not a simple linguistic choice. Factors such as simplicity, convenience, language politics and social identity have to be taken into consideration when addressing the issue of orthography. The complex interaction between writing system and such concepts as identity and modernity will be further analysed in the section below where I present and discuss the findings for the question related to the promotion of literacy in Mauritian. However, it can already be seen that there is an intricate interaction between the choice of orthography and social factors.

4.6 Should literacy in Mauritian be promoted?

Respondents, whether literate in Mauritian or not, were asked if they thought that literacy in Mauritian should be promoted. While many responses to this question are clearly negative, others are definite approvals, and yet others are more nuanced. The responses are presented in Table 4.4 below.

		Should literacy in Mauritian be promoted?			
Respondents		No	Yes	Conditional Yes	No response/ Ambiguous
<13 yrs of age (4)	M	0	1	0	1
	F	0	2	0	0
13-19 (13)	M	1	1	3	0
	F	0	3	3	2
20-39 (27)	M	1	9	3	3
	F	1	1	6	3
40-59 (21)	M	3	5	1	2
	F	3	4	0	3
>59	M	1	0	1	1
(14)	F	2	4	2	3
Total (79)		12	30	19	18

Table 4.4. Respondents by age-group, gender and attitudes to the promotion of literacy in Mauritian.
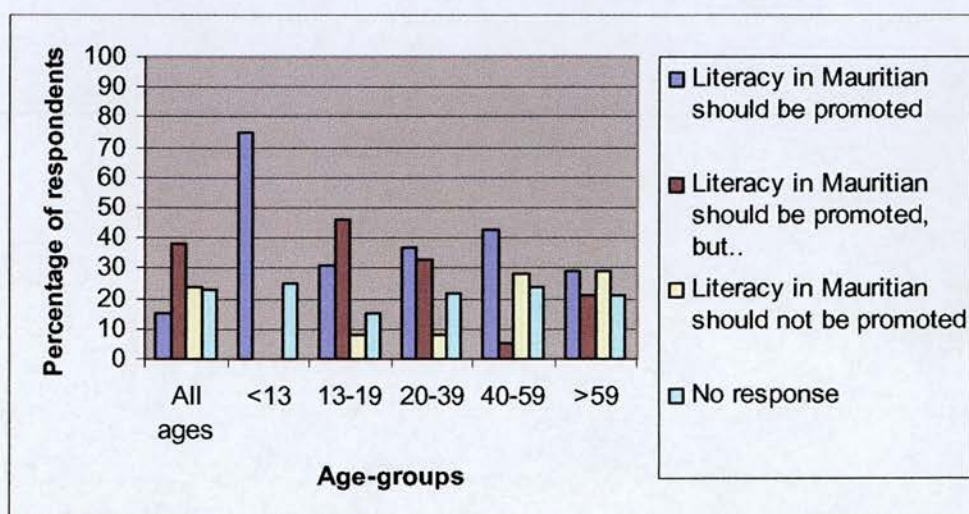
Figure 4.4. Percentage of respondents by age-group and attitudes to the promotion of literacy in Mauritian.

Figure 4.4 shows that 15% of respondents think that literacy in Mauritian should not be promoted, while 38% clearly think that it should. Altogether, 49 interviewees say

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that writing in Mauritian should be encouraged. However, many of these interviewees have some reservations or put forward some conditions regarding the promotion of literacy in Mauritian. These restrictions are explored in the paragraphs below. We first consider the responses of those who argue that writing in Mauritian should not be further supported. It should also be noted that twenty-six out of the forty-nine interviewees who state that written Mauritian should be promoted do not or claim not to actually write the language.

4.6.1 Literacy in Mauritian should not be promoted

The reasons put forward against the promotion of literacy in Mauritian can be classified into three categories:

1. limited scope for the use of written Mauritian.

2. already know how to write it through the French orthography.

3. Mauritian is only an oral and not a written variety.

In these three cases, Mauritian is explicitly or implicitly compared to other languages and its limitations are highlighted. The above categories therefore tend to relate to linguistic hierarchies and hence, ideologies of power. Category 1 highlights the "functional" limitation (Phillipson 1992: 273) of Mauritian. It shows what Mauritian does and does not do. Category 3 underlines its "intrinsic" limitations. Mauritian does not have the power to function as a written language because it is limited to the oral domain. Category 2 emphasises Mauritian's subordinate position *vis-à-vis* French. Added to these is the fact that Mauritian has limited material resources in the form of teachers, dictionaries, grammar books. Mauritian, therefore, cannot be

promoted as a written language because it lacks "innate power" (category 3), "structural power" (category 1) and also, "resource power" (Phillipson 1992: 273).

A relatively small segment of the corpus firmly believes that writing in Mauritian should not be encouraged. Of those who give reasons for their opinions, many argue that it is useless to learn how to write a local variety. That is, they highlight the functional limitations of Mauritian. For instance, Mahmad (20-39, IMM) argues that Mauritian is only a local variety and hence, its written form cannot be used beyond Mauritius. Thus, there are no advantages in promoting writing in Mauritian. Prince (40-59, IMH) echoes Mahmad when he says that Mauritian is not an international language and hence, there is no reason to invest resources in the promotion of its written form. He takes a different line of argument when he further states that since Mauritians are taught how to write French, they will automatically be able to write Mauritian.

Ex 4.10 Pa bisin enkuraz apran ekrir kreol. Ena plizier fason ekrir ek pa servi en deor Moris (…) Ek nu deza kone ekrir fransé.
Learning how to write Creole should not be encouraged. There are many ways of writing it and it is not used outside Mauritius. And then, we already know how to write French.

This view is shared by a few other interviewees who think that Mauritians do not have to learn how to write Mauritian, because literacy in the language is easily/automatically acquired through literacy in French.

Furthermore, the low status of Mauritian, i.e., an intrinsic characteristic, is cited in arguments against its use as a written language. Yamesh (40-59, IMH) believes that

it is a waste of time to encourage Mauritians to write a variety that is not even a language.

Ex 4.11 Perdi leten enkuraz dimun ekrir kreol. Li mem pa en lang.
> It is a waste of time to encourage people to write Creole. It is not even a language.

Hawwan (40-59, IMM) and Mariam (40-59, IMM) think that it is not "proper" *(pa bon)* to write Mauritian. They use French and sometimes, English, in written interactions. What is suggested here is that Mauritian is an oral variety and should remain so. It cannot become a written language because it is perceived only as an inferior variety. As for Mée (>59, FM), she fervently argues that writing Mauritian is a sign of degeneration *(on va en arrière)*. Hence, Mauritians would regress if written Mauritian is promoted. In the minds of some interviewees, therefore, the insularity and low prestige of Mauritian are obstacles to it being promoted as a language in which it is possible to be literate. These attitudes highlight the status of Mauritian as an L variety. According to Ferguson (1959), people do not feel the need to standardise and write the L variety for the very reason that it is not prestigious. They prefer using the H variety in writing. In the Mauritian context, as exemplified by my findings, people tend to prefer French, the H variety, over Mauritian, the L variety. These views firmly place Mauritian below French and illustrate Baker (1997b: 108) point that

> Wherever creoles coexisted with their lexifier, there were few, if any, serious attempts to design autonomous orthographies for them. Instead they were largely written as if they were substandard varieties of the lexifier language.

These views still persist in Mauritian society today.

4.6.2 Literacy in Mauritian should be promoted

Seven of the interviewees who are clearly for the promotion of literacy in Mauritian think that this measure would be especially beneficial to the people who know only Mauritian. They take a very pragmatic perspective on the issue. Many Mauritians, especially the elderly, can only speak Mauritian (and possibly Bhojpuri). Therefore, promoting written Mauritian would help those people acquire literacy in the only language that they can actually speak. Five respondents state that the written form of Mauritian should be propagated particularly if the language will be introduced in the education system. Promoting a written form of Mauritian, therefore, is seen as an asset for the advancement of literacy among young children and those who are competent in Mauritian only. Fourteen of the thirty supporters of written Mauritian do not give reasons for their views.

The promotion of written Mauritian is also viewed as a means of creating a standard form for the language. Dev and Vimal (both aged 20-39, IMH) think that through the dissemination of written Mauritian, the standard form of the language could be promoted among the population.

Ex 4.12 Weh, lerla kapav kone ene fason standar ekrir kreol
     Yes, then we can know a standard way of writing Mauritian.

They believe that currently the standard form of Mauritian is widely ignored. But with continuous campaigns, the standard written form could be further publicised. In this way, Mauritians will be exposed to, and acquire, the standard. Finally, the very insularity and distinct *mauritianness* of Mauritian is cited as an argument in favour of the written language. Aslam (20-39, IMM) believes that the Mauritian language is

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part of the Mauritian culture and as such Mauritians ought to promote the written form of *their* language (more on this in Chapter 7). For Aslam, therefore, language is seen as a means of identity construction and Mauritian as an index of Mauritian identity.

4.6.3 Literacy in Mauritian should be promoted but…

Thirty-eight percent of the interviewees who support the promotion of literacy in Mauritian put forward certain conditions and restrictions. A range of conditions were expressed, but they can generally be grouped into the following categories:

1. there is a need for a standard form first.

2. it should not be extensively used.

3. the promotion should not be at the expense of other languages, especially French.

Seven interviewees feel that the existence of a standard form is a crucial pre-requisite for the promotion of written Mauritian. For example, according to Dimitri (13-19, CP),

Ex 4.13 Oui, ce serait bien de promouvoir le Créole. Mais il faut d'abord créer une orthographe fixe.
Yes, it would be good to promote Creole. But there has to be a fixed orthography first.

Such views suggest that diversity in the Mauritian orthography acts as an impediment to the development of the language. Again, we see that variability is not perceived favourably. It is sometimes seen as a sign of linguistic inferiority. Many interviewees assume that "proper" languages are those varieties that have

institutionalised norms. By extension, Mauritian is not a proper language because its usage is not regulated. From a practical perspective, it is challenging to promote literacy in a language that has no fixed orthography. Also, the pragmatic difficulties in introducing written Mauritian are raised by five interviewees. They argue that in order to promote literacy in Mauritian, local authorities would have to invest a considerable amount of financial resources in this project where complete success cannot be guaranteed. For instance, although Emie (>59, FM) personally believes that literacy in Mauritian should be promoted, she adds that many Mauritians will oppose this measure and be reluctant to write the language.

While some interviewees believe that a standard form has to be first created, Sabah thinks that Mauritians should be encouraged to write Mauritian <u>but not</u> in a standard way. She thinks that the essence of written Mauritian is its flexibility. She says,

Ex 4.14 Literacy in Creole should be promoted to some extent. But there should not be a fixed way of writing Creole. We should invent the language.

As a young poet, Sabah is a fervent supporter of creative and unconventional writing. This probably explains why she believes that writers should be encouraged to use their imagination when writing the language and a standard form should not be imposed.

Restrictions are also put on the domains of use of written Mauritian. Some interviewees believe that Mauritian should be promoted, but not in all spheres of written communication. Though the interviewees are not always accurate as to the exact domains of use of written Mauritian, their replies suggest that the language

should not be used in formal written interactions. Amirah, a teenager, argues that written Mauritian should "not be used for everything". She claims that for formal official purposes, French or English should be used and not Mauritian. Written (and oral) Mauritian, therefore, is not thought appropriate for use in formal situations. The domains of use of written Mauritian are analysed in section 4.6.

Finally, some respondents state that Mauritians should be encouraged to write Mauritian provided that this move is not detrimental to competence in written English and French. We again note here the competitive relationship between Mauritian and English/French. There is a fear that the promotion of written Mauritian will have a negative influence on English and French. Respondents seem to believe that languages evolve in a finite space. It is assumed that an increase in use of, and competence in, one language leads to a fall in competence in another language. Within this competitive framework, (an increase in use of) the L variety Mauritian poses a threat to the prestigious languages. This view is explicitly stated in the response of one interviewee. Tonton (>59, CP) states that extensive and increasing use of written Mauritian will affect the standards of English and French on the island. Clearly, any attempt to promote written or oral Mauritian could potentially be seen as a threat to the two prestigious colonial languages, English and French. Such a stance might even be interpreted as a political move to favour or hinder the interests of specific groups (chapters 2, 5 and 7).

At this stage, it is interesting to draw in Shah's views about the promotion of Mauritian. Shah (20-39, IMM) supports the use of written Mauritian. He thinks that it would be advantageous to know how to write Mauritian:

Ex 4.15 Mo ti pu trouv sa bon mwa, kon ekrir ene lang en plis.
I would find it good to know how to write an extra language.

While the views in the paragraph above show a negative attitude to multilingualism, Shah is in favour of additive multilingualism. He indeed sees multilingualism as an asset: the more languages individuals know, the better it is for them. Unlike many interviewees, he does not think that the promotion of Mauritian would hinder competence in the other languages used on the island.

4.7 Which orthography to promote?

Even though most respondents found this question difficult to answer, seven of them gave definite views as to which orthography should be promoted and hence, used as the standard. Interestingly, six of the seven respondents believe that the phonemic orthography should be promoted. In describing this orthography, they use such terms as "the true creole" (*Vre kreol* – Jayen, 20-39, IMH), "the creole orthography itself" (*kreol la mem* – Shah, 20-39, IMM; also Jean-Claude, Sarah and Viraj). The orthography to be used as the standard should, therefore, be different from French. The notion of "true" or "pure" Mauritian will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Eric (20-39, FM) is the only interviewee who argues that standard Mauritian should be similar to French. He argues that the most important characteristics of the

standard should be clarity, simplicity and accessibility. To him, the phonemic writing system that is currently used in advertisements is difficult to read and write (cf. Raymond in *ex 4.8*). By contrast, the etymological orthography is straightforward and consequently, makes the acquisition of literacy in Mauritian easy. He also supports his views by claiming that since the use of French is increasing in Mauritius, it is the etymological orthography that should be promoted.

Ex 4.16 Le Créole devient de plus en plus proche du français. Nous allons vers le français...vers le futur. Il faut que l'orthographe ressemble au français.
Creole is getting closer to French. We are going towards French...towards the future. The orthography has to resemble French.

Also, according to him, we have to adapt Mauritian to French because the French language is an elaborate and refined international language. He brings forth the inferiority of Mauritian with respect to French.

Eric's language ideologies are in sharp contrast with those of the other respondents. While he wants standard Mauritian to be similar to French so that it can be easily acquired, some of the other respondents believe that standard Mauritian should be as different as possible from French. His arguments are based on notions of simplicity, while theirs are based on concepts of identity. Both lines of reasoning, however, underline the existing relationship, more exactly similarities, between Mauritian and French. While Eric wants to build on the existing similarities between the two languages, the others want to draw them further apart by building on created differences. The term "created" is used here because a spelling system has to be created/invented, and it can be controlled. One cannot so easily control oral language. It could therefore be said that Eric wants to strengthen the perceived

"natural" similarities between Mauritian and French, whereas the other six interviewees want to encourage distinctions between the two languages through the creation of a different writing system for Mauritian.

From the above paragraphs, it can be seen that there is an image of a standard Mauritian that is emerging. This "standard" Mauritian is characterised by the important presence of the letters <k,w,z>. Words also tend to be spelt in a simpler way than in French. For instance, in cases where double letters are used in French, Mauritian opts for single letters: *mettre* v/s *met* ("put"); *carotte* v/s *karot* ("carrot"); *savattes* v/s *savat* ("slippers"). These examples also show the loss of the silent letters (section 4.1). In short, they illustrate the simplicity associated with the spelling system of Mauritian. Advertisements and articles written by the Church and LPT in the phonemic orthography must have had their role to play in this increasing trend towards the standard Mauritian, or as some respondents put it, the "authentic Creole". Authenticity, for our six interviewees, is measured in terms of degree of dissimilarity with French. Meaning is here defined in terms of oppositions. That is, what Mauritian is or means is defined in relation to other similar "entities", i.e., languages. There is a linguistic division in Mauritius where French is seen as the norm and Mauritian is defined positively or negatively in relation to this norm. As Miethaner (2000: 540) puts it, "[i]dentity is constructed by reflecting distance from – or closeness to – related systems". This idea of distinctness and authenticity is very important and we come back to it in Chapter 6 where we discuss local notions of linguistic purity.

4.8 Written domains of use of Mauritian

It was shown above that written Mauritian is gaining grounds in such forms of communication as text messaging and emailing. However, in more conventional written interactions, Mauritian still has not gained unconditional acceptance. As part of the survey, respondents were asked which languages they used in writing emails and letters to (a) friends and (b) bank managers (that is, official letters). In some cases, emails and letters prove to be two distinct domains of communication in terms of choice of language. In other words, some interviewees say they email friends in Mauritian, but prefer using French when writing letters to the same friends. Shah and Dev for instance, both in their twenties, write emails to friends in Mauritian, but opt for French or English when writing letters. Only 11 interviewees claim that they often or sometimes use Mauritian when writing letters to their friends. Four out of these eleven interviewees specify that they use Mauritian only in letters to *bon kamarad* (good/close friends) – thus emphasising the role of Mauritian as the language of intimate friendship. Four other interviewees in this group state that they, in fact, use a mixture of Mauritian and French in letters to friends.

French is clearly the preferred written language for communication with friends (explicitly mentioned by 21 of the 39 interviewees who answered this question). Ten interviewees claim using a combination of French and English, while seven others use only English when writing to friends. Some interviewees indicate that although they write letters in French or English, they might include some Mauritian expressions – those expressions that lose their meaning if translated. The multilingual character of Mauritians can be appreciated in the variety of languages

that can be used in a letter to a friend. English, French and Mauritian can all be combined in a single letter.

Official documents are less multilingual in nature. When respondents were asked about their language choices for official letters, none of them mentioned using a combination of languages. In other words, it was an "either/or" choice between languages. Moreover, none of the respondents would even consider using Mauritian in an official document. They claim to use either French or English when writing official letters, with the preference being for English – the official language.

On the basis of the above paragraphs, some observations can be made on the position of Mauritian in the linguistic landscape. The choice of Mauritian in the written domain is determined by a variety of factors. The main considerations when choosing Mauritian for written communication for my interviewees are:

1.   degree of intimacy and formality

Mauritian tends to be used with good or intimate friends and relatives. This shows that Mauritian is the language of intimacy and solidarity – even in the written domain. This is also supported by the fact that Mauritian is not used in formal interactions. Indeed, Mauritian is never mentioned as a possible language choice for writing an official letter. This could also be explained by the fact that Mauritian has no standard orthography and is not officially regarded as a proper language for use in formal written domains.

2.   a need to express "Mauritianness"

Some expressions are distinctly Mauritian and cannot be translated without losing that distinct Mauritian touch. Likewise, some thoughts can only be properly expressed using Mauritian, the mother-tongue of most Mauritians. Hence, to preserve the accuracy and authenticity of some Mauritian expressions and/or to express thoughts in a coherent manner, some interviewees opt for Mauritian in (parts of) letters that they write to their friends.

Therefore, just like the choice of orthographic system discussed in section 4.4 above, the use of Mauritian as a written language is ideologically loaded. The above paragraphs suggest that written Mauritian has a double indexicality. On the one hand, it is equated with informality, friendship and solidarity. On the other, it has indexical links to Mauritian identity and nationhood. These indexical values are brought out in the following chapters as well.

4.9 A short note on written means of communication, use of Mauritian and formality

The above discussion presents an interesting scale of formality of the written means of communication. We have seen that Mauritian tends to be restricted to informal written and oral communication, while French and English are more likely to be used for formal communication, with the latter being the more formal of the two. On the basis of these tendencies, we can classify the various domains of written communication considered in this section in terms of the degree of formality associated with them. The domains discussed here are: emails, text messages, letters

to friends and official letters. Taking the use of Mauritian as a parameter of formality and informality, the following model is obtained:

Text messages   Emails to friends   Informal/Intimate Letters   Formal emails   Official/formal letters

Least formal   Most formal

Decreasing use of Mauritian
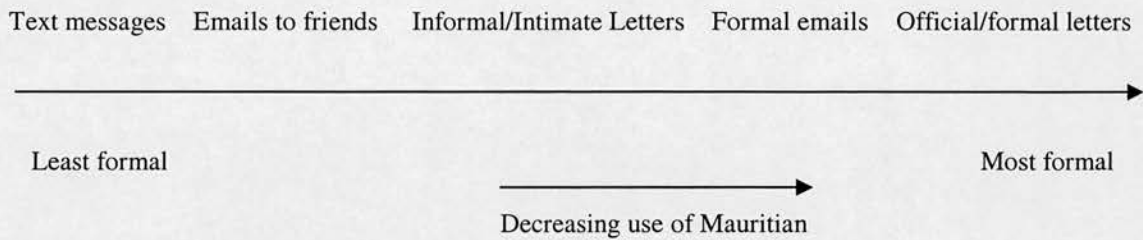
Schema 4.1. Written means of communication, use of Mauritian and degree of formality.

Schema 4.1 gives a possible indication of the degree of formality associated with these domains of written communication and the likelihood of Mauritian being used in each case. As this model is based only on a small sample, it has to be further refined and tested before generalisations can be made for the Mauritian population. From the above figure, it can be seen that text messages are the least formal of the domains of written communication considered in this study. Consequently, we could predict that more Mauritians would use Mauritian in text messages that in informal letters. An individual can even use Mauritian in text messages and then not use it in the other domains. Also, note that formal emails precede formal letters on the scale of formality (Baron 1998).

Moreover, internet chats could be included in this model. However, there is not enough data from the interviews to be able to place chats on this model. To get some indication as to which languages are used during chats, I spent three hours (approximately thirty minutes on six different occasions: two were during the weekend and four were during the week) on the Mauritian chat website *servihoo*.

The chat room I was in was a public one. The themes dealt with were trivial: weather, jokes, fashion, films. Most of the exchanges were in Mauritian with some expressions of French and English added from time to time. I also joined a more serious discussion forum on education. Interestingly, the exchanges were largely in English with a few expressions in Mauritian and French. These observations suggest that the languages used in chat-rooms also depend on the formality and seriousness of the themes discussed in the exchanges. The use of Mauritian in CMC has not been explored yet. It would be interesting to assess the role of CMC in promoting Mauritian as a written language and also, in affecting the status of the language.

4.10   Writing Mauritian and ethnicity

The forty-nine interviewees who write Mauritian are of different ethnic groups. In fact, all ethnic groups discussed in this study, i.e., Indo-Mauritian Hindus, Muslims, Afro-Mauritians, Franco-Mauritians and Coloured Population, are represented in Table 4.5 below. On the basis of the figures below, we can see that proportionately more Muslims (46%) write Mauritian than the other ethnic groups: Franco-Mauritians (43%), Hindus (42%), Coloured Population (30%) and Afro-Mauritians (11%). The phonemic and etymological spelling conventions are used by all ethnic groups (except the Afro-Mauritians who have only one representative literate in Mauritian). Furthermore, more than 50% of each and every ethnic group think that Mauritians should be encouraged to acquire literacy in Mauritian: Hindus – 54%, Muslims – 56%, Coloured Population – 60%, Afro-Mauritians – 82% and Franco-Mauritians – 86%.

A chi-square test performed on these data reveals that there is no significant relationship between ethnicity and use of, and attitudes to the use of, Mauritian in the written domain:

Use of Mauritian in the written domain: $\chi^2 = 3.75$ (to 3 significant figures); degrees of freedom = 4; $p \leq 1$; for significance at 0.05 level, χ^2 should be greater than or equal to 9.49; therefore, the distribution is not significant.

Orthography used: $\chi^2 = 6.64$ (to 3 significant figures); degrees of freedom = 8; $p \leq 1$; for significance at 0.05 level, χ^2 should be greater than or equal to 15.51; therefore the distribution is not significant.

Attitudes to literacy in Mauritian: $\chi^2 = 14.7$, degrees of freedom = 8, $p \leq 0.10$; for significance at 0.05 level, χ^2 should be greater than or equal to 15.51; therefore, the distribution is not significant.

Interviewees	Write Mauritian	Spelling used (excluding the "No Response"- Table 4.3)			Literacy in Mauritian should be promoted
		Phonemic	Etymological	Mixed	
Indo-Mauritian Hindus	10	6	2	2	13
Indo-Mauritian Muslims	12	4	4	0	15
Afro-Mauritians	1	1	0	0	9
Franco-Mauritians	3	1	2	0	6
Coloured Population/ Mixed	3	1	2	0	6
Total	29	13	10	2	49

Table 4.5. Respondents literate in Mauritian by ethnic group, the way they write Mauritian and their attitudes to the promotion of literacy in Mauritian.
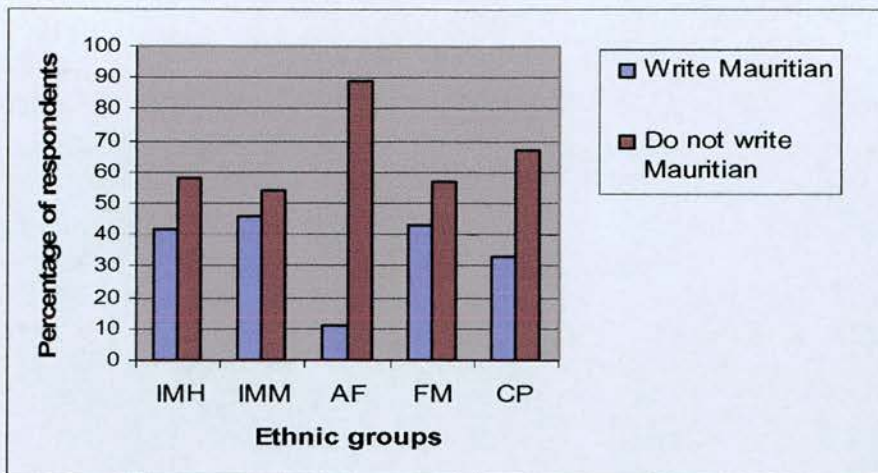
Figure 4.5. Percentage of respondents by ethnicity and use of Mauritian in written interactions.
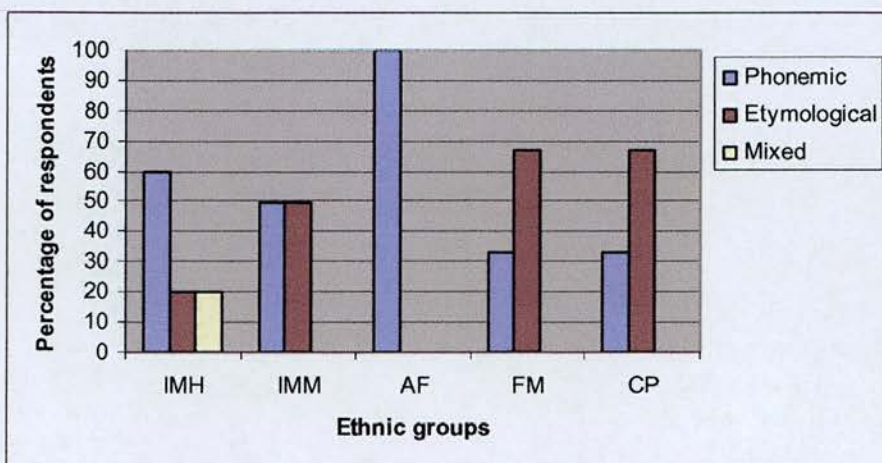
Figure 4.6. Percentage of respondents using Mauritian in written interactions by ethnicity and spelling system used.
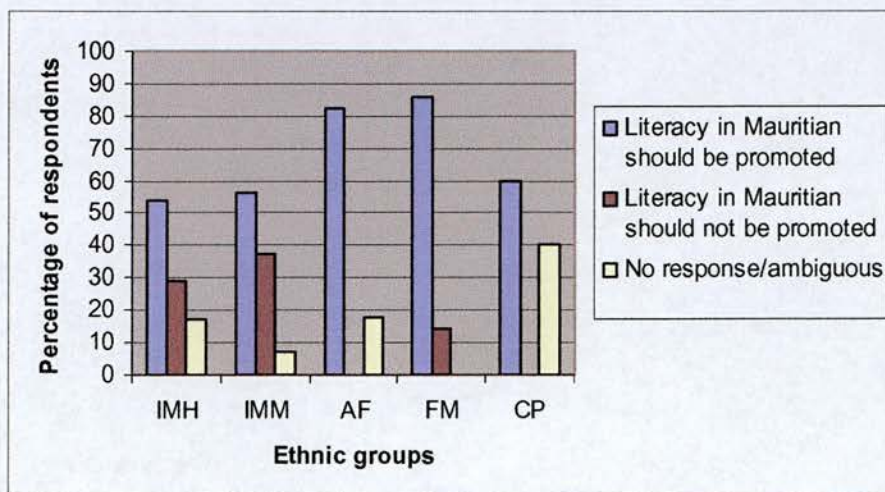
Figure 4.7. Percentage of respondents by ethnicity and attitudes to the promotion of literacy in Mauritian.

The group that is least literate in Mauritian is the Afro-Mauritians. In fact, an important difference can be observed between the Afro-Mauritians and the remaining four groups. As can be seen, even though only one Afro-Mauritian writes Mauritian, most of the people in this group are for the promotion of the written form of the language (9 were for, 2 did not give any response, none were against). Jean-Claude, Josiane and Yolande, all Afro-Mauritians aged between 40 and 59, explain that they find it very difficult to read and write Mauritian. That is the reason why they do not use Mauritian in writing. Jean-Claude argues that had he been taught how to write Mauritian, he would have used it. These Afro-Mauritians, therefore, do not feel competent and confident enough to write Mauritian. Even though most Afro-Mauritians do not or cannot write Mauritian, all literate ones support the promotion of written Mauritian. Most of them believe that such a promotion:

Ex 4.17 pu bon pu ban dimun ki pa kone lezot lang
   would be good for people who do not know other languages.

Jean-Claude thinks that such a move would be especially beneficial *pu bane ki pe lever* (literally: for those who are rising, i.e., the youngsters). He believes that (unlike him) the youngsters will get the opportunity to learn Mauritian at school and hence, promoting its written form will help them in acquiring literacy in the language. Therefore, although the Afro-Mauritians in this sample do not write Mauritian, they are particularly strong supporters of the language. They believe that this promotion will benefit illiterate people or youngsters generally; they do not speak in terms of members of a specific ethnic group (cf. Raymond in *ex 4.20* below).

Furthermore, 3 out of 10 members of the Coloured Population write Mauritian. One of these three respondents seems to write Mauritian *malgré lui*. Tonton (>59) specifies that as an ex-policeman, he sometimes had to note down people's testimonies verbatim. In many cases, the testimonies were given in Mauritian. Thus, he was forced to write Mauritian. He says that he can and does write Mauritian even though he finds it difficult to do so. He uses a spelling convention that is very close to French. Joanne (20-39), another member of the Coloured Population, uses a similar etymological system. Like Tonton, she finds staying close to French easy and convenient. Kevin (13-19), illiterate in Mauritian, argues that had he known how to write Mauritian, he would definitely have used the language in written interactions. He is also one of those who firmly support the promotion of written Mauritian. Only one of the three Coloured People who write Mauritian actually believes that written Mauritian should be promoted, and that too "to some extent" (Joanne, 20-39). Joanne argues that Mauritian should not be promoted at the expense of English and French.

Sarah (20-39), another member of the Coloured Population, also expresses some reservations regarding the promotion of written Mauritian:

Ex 4.18 Enkuraj ékrir kreol pu bon pu imortaliz bane kitchose. Me de la faire sa vin ene lang ofisiel, non.
Encouraging people to write Mauritian would be good for immortalising certain things. But from there, making it into an official language, no.

The above extract highlights Sarah's fear that the promotion of written Mauritian would eventually lead to its elevation as an official language. Once Mauritian has a standard, it will be easier for the language to acquire official status. Standardisation,

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therefore, is a step towards officialisation. But Sarah believes that the use of Mauritian as an official language will lead to chaos (*dezord total* - "total mess").

While Sarah views the promotion of written Mauritian with apprehension, Frances (>59), another member of the Coloured Population, views it with suspicion. Although he thinks that Mauritians should be encouraged to write Mauritian, he adds that

Ex 4.19 ban sa ki pe promuvoir li pa servi li zot-mem.
those who are promoting it, do not use it themselves.

The people who are actually promoting Mauritian – according to Frances, the rich Indo-Mauritians and Franco-Mauritians – are serving their own interests. They want to enhance their own status while keeping the lower classes away from progress. He says that their own children will attend private schools and learn international languages while others will not be as competent as them in the international languages and also, might even be limited to the local language only. In other words, the promotion of literacy in Mauritian by the elites serves to reinforce boundaries between them and the lower classes. Frances, therefore, implicitly links Mauritian with lack of socio-economic progress and subservience. He here echoes the opinions of some of the locals of the Pacific region who view the promotion of literacy in their pidgins and/or creoles with suspicion. Indeed, "attempts to teach children Tok Pisin literacy first are increasingly interpreted as strategies to keep the masses from progress and wealth" (Mühlhäusler 1995: 259). They would prefer to be literate in English – the language of upward social mobility. It could be said that as a working-class individual and a Coloured Person, Frances does not identify with those who (he

thinks) are promoting literacy in Mauritian. In some ways, their attempts are seen as means of subjugating the population so that they can maintain their economic and social domination on the population. Once more, we see how language policies can be interpreted in terms of power relations (section 2.7.2, Chapter 2). Just like the choice of a given orthography, the promotion of literacy in a given language becomes a means of empowering or oppressing specific groups.

Furthermore, 42% of the Hindu representatives use Mauritian in writing while 54% believe that the written form of the language should be promoted. Proportionately they represent the group least favourable to the promotion of literacy in Mauritian. The Hindus in this sample tend to prefer the phonemic orthography as it is "easy, convenient or straightforward". Those who do not write the language either find it too difficult to do so (e.g., Suresh 40-59, Sushita 20-39) or believe that since it is not a language, it cannot be written (e.g., Ram in *ex 4.4* above; also Yamesh and Prince). These Indo-Mauritians do not oppose the promotion of literacy in Mauritian on any ethnic grounds (unlike Frances, for instance). They think that the variety is "flawed" in some sense and therefore, should not be promoted. Also, the Hindus who support the promotion of literacy in Mauritian do not do so on ethnic grounds either. Most of them believe that this move will be beneficial to people who only know Mauritian or help in the promotion of a standard. Some Mauritians do adopt an "ethnic" approach when supporting the promotion of literacy in Mauritian, as will be shown below.

Only one Franco-Mauritian in this sample uses the phonemic orthography. Veronique (>59) says that she has "no difficulty using the <k,w,z>" when writing

Mauritian. As for Eric (20-39) and Raymond (40-59), they find this writing system difficult. Also, all the Franco-Mauritians in this sample, with the exception of Mée (>59), believe that literacy in Mauritian should be promoted. Veronique, for instance, argues that young school-children should be encouraged to acquire literacy in Mauritian first because it is their mother-tongue. Her views can be compared to those of linguists who believe that the "teaching of initial literacy (…) is in a language that the learner can speak" (Gerbault 1997: 148). As for Lily (>59), although she thinks that the written form of Mauritian should be promoted, she finds it "difficult" to imagine that it will be accepted by the whole population (parallel with Emie in 4.6.3). The two most interesting responses are probably those of Raymond (40-59) and Mée.

Raymond believes literacy in Mauritian should be promoted if it can "valorise" the Creoles:

Ex 4.20 Si ça peut valoriser le Créole, pourquoi pas? (…) Le vrai Créole se sent
    exclu de la société.
    If it can valorise the Creole, why not? (…) The true Creole feels
    excluded from society.

The above extract highlights the indexical relationship between Mauritian and the ethnic group Creole. We further explore the association between the Creoles and Mauritian in Chapter 7. At this stage, it is worth noting that Raymond clearly sees Mauritian as the language of the Creoles. He believes that a promotion of the language would add to the self-esteem of the Creoles who presently feel alienated from society. Hence, a move to change the status of Mauritian, the language

excluded from official domains, has a direct impact on the Creoles, the social group excluded from society.

Finally, Mée differs from the other Franco-Mauritians in that she is convinced that the promotion of written Mauritian is detrimental to the nation. As we have seen above, she associates the language with regression and primitiveness. Promoting a "vulgar" (*vulgaire*) language can only turn Mauritians into savages. *On va devenir sauvage* (we'll become savages), she says. She evaluates Mauritian as a backward language which can be set in opposition to other developed/civilised languages, including her own mother-tongue French. Her claim conforms to the widespread view that creoles are "substandard varieties of their lexifier language" (Baker 1997b: 108). Unlike the other Franco-Mauritians, therefore, Mée assigns a different indexical value to Mauritian.

Although Muslims in the corpus use Mauritian the most in writing, they are not the most fervent supporters of literacy in Mauritian (56% as opposed to, for example, 86% for the Franco-Mauritians). Muslims use either a "Creole" orthography or an etymological one. Their orthographic choice is motivated by the need to express a distinct Mauritian identity and/or the need to have an "easy" spelling system. Those Muslims who support writing in Mauritian think that such a promotion will help in the creation of a standard or improvement of literacy levels among youngsters and/or old people.

As for Aslam (20-39), he sees literacy in Mauritian as a way of promoting the Mauritian culture as he believes that the language is *nu kiltir sa* (our culture). While the Franco-Mauritian Raymond thinks that Mauritian is the language of the Creole, Aslam argues that Mauritian is a language that forms part of his culture and identity as a Mauritian Muslim. Aslam, therefore, rejects the "ethnic" approach in favour of a "national" one. In other words, he says that the language belongs to all Mauritians – whether Muslim, Creole or Hindu (more on linguistic ownership in Chapter 7). Like other ethnic groups, the Muslims put forward a variety of reasons to explain their opposition to literacy in Mauritian. While Mahmad (section. 4.6.1) says that it is pointless promoting a local variety, Mariam and Hawwan affirm that it is simply "not proper to write Mauritian". As for Zahra (>59), she is concerned that by learning Mauritian, people might "lose English and French". In this part of the study, none of the Muslims suggests that Mauritian is the language of a particular ethnicity, religion or even social class. On the contrary, it is treated as the language of the nation. Even Muslims who oppose the promotion of the written form of Mauritian suggest that it will be detrimental to the nation – not to themselves as a group.

This section shows that interviewees, irrespective of their ethnic group, use a variety of spelling conventions when writing Mauritian and also, generally have positive attitudes towards the promotion of literacy in the language. Although some respondents see literacy in Mauritan as a tool to promote or hinder the interests of some ethnic groups, most tackle the issue from a nation-wide perspective. That is, the latter group sees the promotion of written Mauritian as advantageous or disadvantageous to the nation as a whole. Therefore, given this situation, it is

reasonable to say that ethnicity is not a major parameter in assessing attitudes to written Mauritian. Interviewees' attitudes towards literacy in Mauritian could be influenced by other factors such as gender, social class and place of residence. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to address the roles of these other variables in attitudes to written Mauritian.

4.11   Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that it is important to consider attitudes to literacy in Mauritian in a general discussion on attitudes to the language. By briefly referring to the situation for Haitian Creole and Sranan and discussing the situation for Mauritian, I have shown how the choice of orthography can reflect language ideologies.

Even though Mauritian is gaining grounds in the written domain, the use of this language in written interactions is not widespread in this corpus. The language is mostly used by young people for writing text messages or emails. Therefore, as emailing and texting become more widespread we would expect to see an increasing use of written Mauritian in the coming years.

Moreover, the promotion of literacy in Mauritian has extensive support in this corpus. Many respondents believe that such a promotion will be beneficial to the illiterate elderly and young children. However, none of the respondents thinks that it is proper to use Mauritian in formal written interactions. Therefore, written Mauritian is largely limited to informal domains. In fact, judging by respondents' views, it

might take a long time before Mauritian is actually accepted and used in formal written interactions.

From this small sample, it can be seen that there is a general preference for the phonemic orthography as the standard. Interviewees favour an orthography that is easy and distinctly "Mauritian". Language planners and policy-makers should bear such attitudes in mind when devising and promoting a spelling system for the language.

Furthermore, in this sample, literacy in Mauritian is not associated with any one ethnic group in particular, but rather is seen as a national phenomenon. Indeed, the above findings suggest that respondents' ethnicity is unlikely to influence their attitudes to the use of Mauritian in written interactions or to the promotion of literacy in the language. As there is no clear-cut correspondence between ethnicity and specific attitudes, we have to look to other variables in order to explain the varying attitudes. As suggested above, age could be an important factor in influencing attitudes to written Mauritian. Further research in this area could look more closely at the impact of such variables as age, gender and level of education on use of Mauritian in the written domain.

The tension between languages is brought out in this chapter. Mauritian is seen as a threat to other languages, mainly the two prestigious colonial languages. Mauritian, unlike English and French, is a local language with limited prospects for use outside the country. In order to ensure success, campaigners for Mauritian will have to

reassure the population that the promotion of this language will not hinder competence in other languages, especially, competence in English and French.

This chapter clearly shows that interviewees do not generally use the standards proposed by Virahsawmy and LPT. In fact, most interviewees are not even aware that Mauritian has been standardised. That is, they believe that Mauritian is still a non-standard language. The non-standard nature of Mauritian is seen as an obstacle to its promotion as official language and also its use in the education sector, as will be shown in the following chapter.

Finally, it remains to be seen how the official orthography currently in preparation will be received by the public (Note 2). Securing acceptance, an important part of any language planning (Haugen 1966), is not a straightforward matter – especially in the case of creole languages which are sometimes seen as inferior and broken varieties of their lexifiers (section 4.1). It might take the population a long time before they can accept a standard for Mauritian and also actively use it for written interactions. In fact, Mauritian orthography might have to go through a lengthy process of experimentation – like Haitian Creole (Dejean 1980) – before a widely accepted official standard can emerge.

Chapter Five

Mauritian and Education

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss language use and attitudes to the use of Mauritian in the education sector. In the first section, I briefly describe the current linguistic situation in the national education system and underline the pedagogical importance of using Mauritian at school. I then discuss the questions related to the school domain in the survey. In the following section, I analyse responses to the survey questions. This analysis is followed by a discussion on the relationship between these responses and ethnicity. I then go on to examine attitudes to the use of Mauritian by the head-teacher (a figure of authority) in the school setting. I also discuss interviewees' language choice when interacting with teachers. The final section consists of a brief summary and conclusion.

5.1 Background

The education system of Mauritius promotes the use of English, French and oriental languages, but seems totally oblivious of the existence of Mauritian (section 2.5 in Chapter 2 gives a thorough description of the schooling system of Mauritius). Indeed, the most widely spoken variety and most common native language of Mauritians has no recognised position in the national education sector. However, the lack of official recognition does not prevent teachers and students from using the language at school. The importance of using Mauritian in the first years of schooling has been highlighted by a number of linguists, pedagogues, social scientists and

some members of the general public (e.g., Meade 1961, Ramdoyal 1977, *L'Express* 17 October 1997, *Le Mauricien* 18 October 1997, Ah Nee 2002, Romaine 2002, Virahsawmy 2002, Skutnabb-Kangas 2003). But for a long time, the Government have ignored this linguistic and pedagogical issue. That is, Mauritian has neither been introduced as a medium of instruction in the first few years of formal education, nor has it been included as a subject on a par with other languages such as French or even oriental languages. This situation is likely to change as the Minister of Education has promised to introduce Mauritian in school in the coming years – we do not know when exactly this will take place. The use of Mauritian in the education sector is not simply a linguistic issue, but a socio-political one, as will be shown in the sections below.

The arguments supporting the introduction of Mauritian in the first years of schooling focus on the benefits of using the native language at school. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the rate of failure at CPE (Certificate of Primary Education) level is high: it is more than 35%. According to Mauritian linguists like Tirvassen (1989) and Virahsawmy (2002), the fact that 1 in 3 pupils fail their CPE exams suggests that there is a major problem with the Mauritian education system. This high rate of failure has been largely explained in terms of language choice in the classroom. In fact, the use of English as medium of instruction from the first year of primary school is held largely responsible for the significant rates of failure at both primary and secondary levels (e.g., Rughoonundun 1990, Ah Nee 2002).

But what is the problem with English? As stated in Chapter 2, English is the language of administration and formal interactions. As such, it is hardly used as a spoken language in the local context. Its use is therefore highly restricted and Mauritians tend to have limited exposure to the language, especially the spoken form of the language (even American and British films are translated into French). Linguists wonder how five-year old Mauritians can start their formal education in a medium that is totally foreign to them. When they join school, young Mauritians have to perform two major tasks: they have to learn various new subjects, but most importantly, they have to learn these subjects in a language that is largely alien to them. They are acquiring new knowledge and simultaneously a new language. This is an almost Herculean task for a five-year old. As the locally well-known editorialist Ah Nee puts it, "how can you learn the unknown through the unknown?" (personal communication, interview in 2003). Added to that is the fact that children find themselves in a totally new environment. Therefore, the children have to adapt to a new setting, new knowledge and new languages at the same time.

Many pedagogues and linguists around the world insist that children cannot perform to their best of their ability in a system where the medium of instruction is foreign to them (e.g., Chaudenson 1989, Tirvassen 1989, Stuart 1993, Watson-Gegeo 1994, Banda 2000, Desai 2001, Virahsawmy 2002). It is argued that no proper attention is given to the cognitive and linguistic needs of the children. Children should not be made to feel that their own native language is totally excluded from the school environment. Some non-linguists in Mauritius have come to similar conclusions. According to Father Fanchette (personal communication, interview in 2003), the

exclusion of the mother-tongue in the school system could signal to a child that her own language is improper for use in the domain of education. The child's mother-tongue is excluded from the very foundation of her academic training. This could create a sense of alienation between her home environment and consequently, her culture; and her educational environment. Therefore, through language, education is set in opposition to home. In this way, the child is taught to look up to another language and hence another culture, and look down on her own culture and language which is unfit for education matters.

These views have institutional backing as well. According to Unesco (1953: 11),

It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understranding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium.

However, as the authors of this document point out (1953: 6),

. there are many other factors – social, political, economic and practical – which impede the development of these languages, or even the employment of certain languages already well suited to be used in education. Some of these difficulties may be promptly overcome (e.g. orthography); others (social or political), at best, may take much longer.

The above extract highlights the importance of the mother-tongue in education. Children have officially been given the right to be educated in their mother-tongue. It presents the possibility of using the mother-tongue as a transition to another medium of instruction. The extract also shows that all mother tongues can be used as media of instruction although there are several obstacles before some of them can actually be introduced in the education system. The barriers highlighted here are brought

forward by my interviewees when discussing attitudes to Mauritian in the education sector.

In Mauritius, the education system goes further than simply ignoring the existence of Mauritian, it actively denigrates the language. In some schools, pupils are asked not to speak Mauritian and are rewarded for speaking French. This was confirmed in interviews. For instance, one Creole respondent, Josiane, states that in her son's state primary school, children are not allowed to speak Mauritian in class and are rewarded for speaking French. They are thus taught to look down on their mother-tongue and look up to the European language. Reward is associated with European languages while punishment and/or failure are linked to the mother-tongue and consequently, native culture. Thus, the child is alienated from her natural linguistic environment. To overcome these pedagogical and socio-psychological problems, it has been suggested that in the first few years of primary schooling, Mauritian should be used as a medium of instruction with a gradual switch to English. In this way, the transition from the home setting to the school one will be smooth in that there will not be an abrupt linguistic change from home to school. In addition, new concepts will first be acquired through a known medium and the child will also value her own mother-tongue while realising the importance of other languages.

The need for the introduction of the mother-tongue in the education sector and its use as a medium of instruction has been acknowledged early in the history of colonial Mauritius (Ramdoyal 1977). In 1961, Meade *et al.* submitted a report to the Colonial Office, where they argued that the Indian vernacular languages and Mauritian should be introduced in the education system. According to them, this measure would

ensure that students could start their formal education in their own maternal languages. In those days, Indian languages were still widely used as native languages. Meade *et al.* attributed the national illiteracy rate to the use of English as medium of instruction and also, to the number of languages taught in primary school. They believed that

> There is no reason to doubt the intelligence of the future citizens of Mauritius, but there is unfortunately very good reason for doubting whether the present primary school system will produce literacy. In fact it is not too much to say that the system at present operating is more likely to produce illiteracy.
>
> (Meade *et al.* 1961: 207)

Even though the pedagogical needs of young Mauritians have not changed, the linguistic situation of the island has changed significantly since the Meade report. Nowadays, in most cases, Mauritian has replaced the Indian languages as languages of the home. But their point that the native language has to be used as a medium of instruction in the first years at primary school remains valid. Thus, the debate has shifted from the use of Indian vernaculars as media of instruction to that of Mauritian only.

The discussion about the use of the native language as a medium of instruction is not unique to Mauritius but is shared with many creole-speaking and/or post-colonial nations. In fact, according to Roy-Campbell (2001: 267), "educational language choice has been one of the most provocative issues of the 20th century and continues to be a dominant issue at the turn of the new millennium". In creole-speaking Seychelles, for instance, the role of languages in the education system was a hotly debated issue in the 1970s and 1980s. Rates of failure were high: a number of children would leave school illiterate (Bollée 1993). The "apparent inadequacy of the

system" (1993: 88) was attributed to the use of English as medium of instruction – a parallel can here be drawn to the Mauritian situation. To remedy to this situation, Creole (*Seselwa*), the native language of most inhabitants of Seychelles, was introduced in the education system in 1982. In the first years of primary school, Seselwa functions mainly as a medium of instruction and English as a subject. There is a gradual shift from Seselwa to English as medium of instruction in the last years of primary school. French is also taught as a subject. Although the use of Seselwa in the education system was first opposed by members of the public, it is now generally accepted. Also, literacy rates and performance in other subjects have improved.

The introduction of the mother-tongue has therefore had positive effects on the education level in Seychelles. The Government also introduced Seselwa in schools in order to "create a democratic system of education, giving equal opportunities to children of all social and linguistic backgrounds" and also, to "promote local culture" (1993: 88). The promotion of Seselwa is therefore explicitly tied to issues of power and identity. By giving opportunities to children of various backgrounds, the Government try to ensure an equitable distribution of resources and equal access to education. When English was the medium of instruction, mostly children whose parents were part of the socio-economic elite would succeed. Through language in the education system, the Government are thus redefining the power relations. The introduction of Seselwa in the school system is also seen as a means of promoting a local identity. Seselwa, therefore, becomes an index of identity and is thus set in opposition to other non-local languages and identities.

The situation in creole-speaking Dominica is different from that of Seychelles and is closer to that of Mauritius. In Dominica, like in Mauritius, English is the official language and the medium of instruction while the creole (*Patwa*) is the native language of the majority of inhabitants. However, Patwa is not used in the education system because it is not a socially acceptable language (Stuart 1993). English is the socially acceptable and prestigious language. Till the 1970s, children would be beaten if they were heard using Patwa at school. For a long time, the language has "been viewed as incompatible with social acceptability and harmful to educational achievement, by parents and educational establishment alike" (1993: 62). But attitudes are currently changing. High rates of failure are partly attributed to the choice of medium of instruction – a similar situation to Mauritius and Seychelles. Even though Patwa is still not used as a medium of instruction, many teachers have recognised its pedagogical and cultural importance. Children are no longer punished for speaking Patwa. But according to Stuart (1993), there is still a lot of work to do – e.g., teacher training, formal standardisation of the language – before Patwa can be introduced in the school syllabus.

Furthermore, in many post-colonial African countries, social scientists and linguists have been fighting for the recognition of indigenous languages and against the hegemony of colonial languages, especially in the education sector (e.g., Phillipson 1992). In Namibia, for instance, there are thirteen languages of instruction, including three European languages, in the first years of schooling (Brock-Utne 1997). English is the official language of the country. As such, it is a prestigious language which Namibians, especially the youth, are keen to master. However, the growing

popularity of English and its use as a medium of instruction have been detrimental to Namibian languages and culture. It is argued that "the curricula lack an indigenous ingredient, namely the cultural capital of the African masses" (Nekhwevha 1999: 491). But there are differing attitudes towards the use of Namibian languages in the education system. For instance, many Namibian parents believe that "it is important for educated people in Namibia to know English" and "the emphasis on a local language will take time away from the "international" language" (Brock-Utne 1997: 253). Many Namibian parents have been conditioned to see English as the language of economic progress and cannot see any benefit in using indigenous languages as means of instruction. Fourie (1997) states that the Namibian Government should launch a campaign to convince parents of the pedagogical importance of mother-tongue education.

Users' attitudes are sometimes an obstacle to the use of mother-tongues as media of instruction. In Sierra Leone, for instance, the Constitution supports the use of Sierra Leonenan languages as media of instruction in the first three years of primary school (Kamanda 2002). The third year of school is a transition year in that both a Sierra Leonean language and English are used as media of instruction. From Class 4 onwards, English functions as the only medium of instruction and is taught as a subject. However, Sierra Leoneans' attitudes towards mother-tongue education are negative. They believe that literacy in indigenous languages is not useful and value English as an international language. According to Kamanda (2002: 199), these language ideologies are "part of a psychological make-up which is integral to the

indoctrination that has been effectively executed, first by missionaries and colonisers during the colonial period, and later by their successors".

In many countries, therefore, the general public have been made to feel that their own native language is an inadequate medium of instruction. This is especially true of post-colonial nations as exemplified in the case of Namibia and Sierra Leone. The people of these countries rate the colonial language(s) more highly than their own languages. The colonial language is generally seen as the way to science, technology and knowledge (Phillipson 1992). The native language is believed to be limited to in-group communication and hence, to be a barrier to socio-economic progress. This strong Eurocentric bias makes it difficult for linguists and pedagogues to convince laypeople of the utility of local languages in the first years of schooling.

In Mauritius, this issue takes an added significance in that the education system is presently in a period of major changes, especially at the primary level (Chapter 2). The status of oriental languages and that of Mauritian in the education system are some of the actively discussed themes in this national debate. Numerous newspaper articles supporting the introduction of Mauritian as a medium of instruction have been published by the group Ledikasyon Pu Travayer (LPT) and individuals like Dev Virahsawmy. These groups and individuals deplore the lack of initiative on the part of the Government. In an open letter to the Minister of Education, Alain Ah Vee and Lindsay Collen (2003: 10), two members of LPT, accuse the Government of committing the "linguistic genocide" of young Mauritians[10]:

> The State is, in fact, hindering our people in the natural expression of our languages, Bhojpuri and Kreol. It is this that makes the Government responsible,

through the schools in particular, for a crime against humanity, the crime of linguistic genocide. That is what we are accusing you of, Mr Minister.

In a press article, Ah Vee further (2003: 33) argues that Unesco – to which Mauritius subscribes – clearly states that children should be taught in their mother-tongue. Therefore, by allowing Mauritian to function as a medium of instruction, policy-makers will only be giving children their due.

In the above cases, we were looking at the use of languages as media of instruction. But languages can also be introduced in the education system as subjects of study. So, if Mauritian is introduced in the education system, it could function both as a medium of instruction and subject of study. Some individuals and groups like *Muvman Mobilisation Kréol Afrikin* (MMKA), *Plate-forme pour l'Unité des Créoles* and *Mouvman Bienet Kreol Roche-Bois* (MBKR) support the teaching of Mauritian at school, i.e., as subject of study. They specifically advocate the teaching of Mauritian as an ancestral language. We saw in Chapter 2 that ancestral languages are offered as options to primary school children. None of the ancestral languages taught in primary schools are of direct cultural relevance to Creole and Coloured pupils. While their peers study an additional language, the Creole and Coloured pupils take religious classes (section 2.5). That is why groups like MBKR feel that Mauritian should be included as one of the ancestral languages taught in school. They argue that Creole children are at a disadvantage because *their* ancestral language is not included as one of the options. They want Mauritian to be introduced in school on a par with other ancestral languages (*Le Mauricien* 10 February 2004; *L'Express* 21 February 2004; *Le Mauricien* 15 March 2004). This perspective clearly

marks Mauritian as an ethnic language. The introduction of Mauritian as an ancestral language would not affect the whole Mauritian population but only the Creole and Coloured members of the population. The use of Mauritian as medium of instruction and subject of study has different implications for the education system and the population – as will become clearer in the sections below. It should be noted that Mauritian could also be taught as a subject of study to all Mauritian students. In this case, it would be in a similar situation as French and would be studied by Mauritians of all ethnic categories.

With the proposed plan to introduce Mauritian in schools in the near future, it is important to find out how those at the receiving end feel about the use of Mauritian as a medium of instruction. That is, what are the attitudes of the general public to the use of Mauritian in the classroom? In an attempt to answer this question, I asked some of my interviewees their opinions regarding the use of Mauritian as a medium of instruction in primary school. Given that the sample is small, these views cannot certainly be taken to reflect the opinions of the majority of Mauritians. But they do at least give us a flavour of the current attitudes to the use of Mauritian in the education sector.

5.2 Education questions in the survey

To understand prevailing language attitudes in the education sector in Mauritius, respondents were asked how they would feel if:

1. Mauritian was introduced in school

The question regarding the introduction of Mauritian in school was initially meant to be divided into 2 parts: (a) the teaching of Mauritian as a subject and (b) the use of Mauritian as a medium of instruction. Although seemingly related, these two parts deal with different topics and could, therefore, potentially highlight different attitudes to Mauritian. In the first case, Mauritian is seen as a subject that can be taught in the same way as French or Hindi, for instance. In the second case, other subjects, like Mathematics and Geography, are taught in Mauritian, i.e., Mauritian takes on the role of English. However, those interviewees who were asked both parts of the question found them confusing. These two topics seemed similar and interviewees found it difficult to answer the questions coherently. Some interviewees also felt that it was absolutely inconceivable that Mauritian should be used in the same way as English. That is, the question of Mauritian as a medium of instruction did not even arise.

Virahsawmy (2003) also notes that many Mauritians tend to confuse the terms "medium of instruction" (*lang mediom*) and "language as a subject" (*lang size*). The distinction between these two terms has never been made clear in Mauritius. He believes that the introduction of Mauritian as *lang size* will eventually help the language into becoming *lang mediom* for two reasons. First, students who opt for Mauritian as *lang size* would perform so well that the "pedagogical merits" of the language "will become clearer in the mind of people" (*so potansiel pedagozik pou vinn plis kler dan lespri dimoun* (2003: 8)). Second, the introduction of Mauritian in the classroom will boost its prestige and get many parents to appreciate its importance in the development of their children. Another practical reason could be added to the above. Before Mauritian can function as a medium of instruction, it has

to be first established as a language that can be taught, i.e., have its own standard orthography and grammar. For all these reasons, therefore, I tended to restrict the question to the introduction of Mauritian as a subject in school (the teaching of Mauritian, rather than in Mauritian) which seemed more conceivable to respondents. I will specifically point out responses where a difference was clearly made between Mauritian as a subject and Mauritian as a medium of instruction.

2. the head-teacher used Mauritian in the morning school assembly.

In many schools, the day begins with an assembly where prayers are read and announcements are made. In others, assemblies are not part of the daily routine, but are only occasionally done. The daily or occasional school assembly can be considered as a formal sub-domain within school. These assemblies are usually led by the head-teacher. In Mauritian society, head-teachers are held in high esteem. They command respect from parents, pupils and also members of their staff. As could be expected, the Head-Teacher position is more prestigious than that of the teacher. Given this situation, we would expect High languages to be used with and by head-teachers.

These two questions, therefore, target respondents' attitudes to the use of Mauritian in school and also, by a figure of authority. Interviewees' language choice when addressing their teachers was also recorded.

5.3 Should Mauritian be introduced in schools?

We first consider attitudes to the teaching of Mauritian in school. Most respondents have definite opinions about whether or not Mauritian should be taught as a subject in school. There are some cases of indecision. There are also some interviewees who express certain reservations although they generally support the introduction of Mauritian in schools. Table 5.1 below shows responses given by interviewees' age group and gender.

Interviewees		Should Mauritian be introduced in schools?				Total
		Yes	Yes, with reservations	No	No opinion	
<13 yrs of age	M	1	0	0	1	2
	F	1	0	0	1	2
13-19	M	4	1	2	0	7
	F	2	0	4	0	6
20-39	M	2	2	11	1	16
	F	1	1	9	0	11
40-59	M	3	2	6	0	11
	F	3	0	5	2	10
>59	M	0	0	2	1	3
	F	1	2	5	3	11
Total		18	8	44	9	79

Table 5.1. Respondents by age group, gender and attitudes to the introduction of Mauritian in schools.
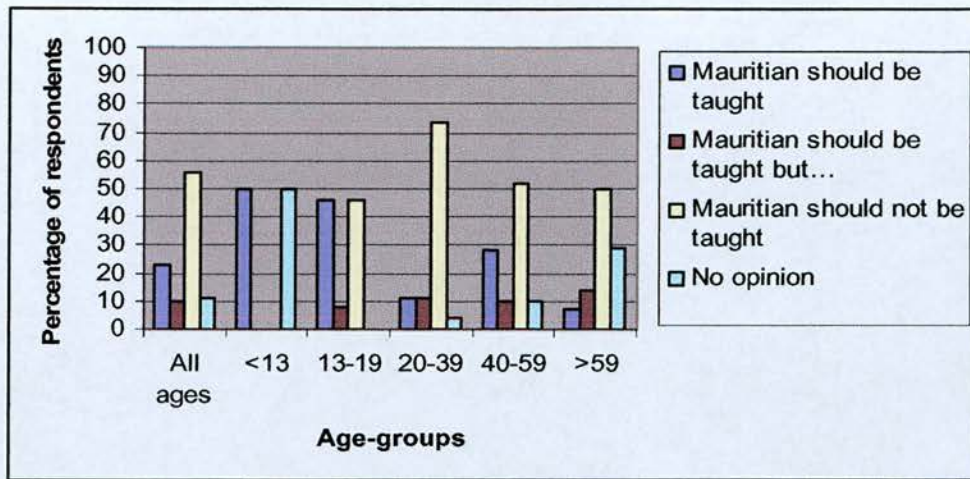
Figure 5.1. Percentage of respondents by age-group and attitudes to the introduction of Mauritian in schools.

Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1 show that respondents are generally against the introduction of Mauritian in the school system. Indeed, only 23% of the interviewees are for the teaching of Mauritian while 56% are against. Also, 10% approve of this measure but have some reservations. It should also be noted that 11% are undecided as to whether or not Mauritian should be introduced in the education system.

Figure 5.1 shows that important differences can be observed among the various age-groups. The most favourable answers can be found in the youngest age-groups: 50% and 46% for the <13 and 13-19 age-groups, respectively. The <13 age-group is very small, therefore, it is difficult to generalise for the youngest respondents. But the findings are interesting because <13 and 13-19 groups are the ones directly affected by changes in the education sector. They are part of the school system and any major linguistic change will have a direct impact on their academic performance. They are those who have to deal with learning in a foreign language. That those primarily involved in the education domain are generally favourable to the use of Mauritian in

the school system could be taken as a positive sign for those wanting to introduce the language at school.

The highest proportion of unfavourable responses can be found in the 20-39 age-group. Seventy-four percent of those aged between 20 and 39 years are against the introduction of Mauritian in the school-system. This age-group is also closely involved in the education system in the sense it is likely that their children are part of the education system – especially primary school system. Like the Dominicans and Namibians, they prefer that their children learn an international language rather than the local language(s). Their attitudes parallel those of the parents in Seychelles "for whom the acquisition of English, the language of prestige and social advancement, remained the essential objective of education" (Bollée 1993: 89).

Fifty-two percent and fifty percent of those aged between 40 and 59 years and >59, respectively, are unfavourable to the introduction of Mauritian in the school system. Like the 20-39 age-group, it is likely that the 40-59 age-group is closely involved in the education system. We would therefore have expected higher proportions of unfavourable responses. But surprisingly, this age-group is relatively supportive of the introduction of Mauritian in the school system. Approximately a third of those aged between 40 and 59 years support the teaching of Mauritian.The children of most of these interviewees had already completed their primary schooling and therefore, would not be affected by the change in medium of instruction. These interviewees, therefore, are not as closely implicated as the 20-39 age-group in the educational reforms. In some ways then, they can examine the issue from a more

detached perspective – though not completely detached because their children are still part of the education system. They tend to see the use of Mauritian as an important pedagogical tool that makes the acquisition of knowledge easier.

As for the oldest age-group, some of them have grandchildren attending primary school. In a way, therefore, through their grandchildren, some of these respondents are also concerned with educational reforms. The limited support for teaching Mauritian in this age-group could indicate that (like parents) they fear that the introduction of Mauritian in the education system would impede the academic progress of their grandchildren. We should also note that this group has the highest proportion of "no response" after the <13. In this case, their attitudes could be explained in terms of their distance from the school system. They might find it difficult to relate to reforms in the education system.

The above paragraphs suggest that the issue of Mauritian as *lang size* and Mauritian as *lang mediom* cannot be completely dissociated from each other. In our discussion, the distinction between Mauritian as *lang size* and Mauritian as *lang mediom* was sometimes blurred. Though the interview question focused on Mauritian as *lang size* (section 5.2), some interviewees incorporated the issue of Mauritian as *lang mediom* in their responses – as will be shown in the sections below where we explore the reasons put forward to justify the responses in Table 5.1.

5.3.1 Mauritian should be introduced in schools

Only 12 of the 18 respondents who are for the teaching of Mauritian go on to give reasons for their responses. For the purpose of discussion and clarity, the responses are grouped under three headings:

1. understanding of other subjects

2. standardisation of the language

3. symbol of identity

The first argument highlights the usefulness of Mauritian as a medium of instruction. Five of the twelve respondents argue that the introduction of Mauritian in school would enable young children to gain a better understanding of the subjects taught. When justifying their views, those respondents clearly do not restrict themselves to Mauritian as a subject but also include Mauritian as a medium of instruction. Nawshad (20-39, IMM), for instance, thinks that youngsters would learn "faster" if they were taught in their mother-tongue. As for Sushita (20-39, IMH), she argues that Mauritian would provide "a good base for the learning of English". In this case, therefore, Mauritian is seen as a starting point for learning other subjects including English, which will in later years become the medium of instruction. However, she adds that there should be sufficient planning before Mauritian can be taught in schools. That is, Mauritian should be properly standardised beforehand and also, appropriate teaching material should be made available in the language. On the whole, therefore, these five interviewees perceive the use of Mauritian at school as an asset to the acquisition of knowledge by young children. In other words, through Mauritian – the Known – young Mauritians would learn other subjects – the Unknown – in a more efficient manner. They clearly echo some of the arguments put forward by pedagogues and linguists, quoted in 5.1 above.

Those who put forward argument (2) interpreted "teaching of Mauritian" at school as "teaching Mauritian as a subject" (theme (a) in 5.2) and not as "using the language as a medium of instruction". Four respondents believe that through the formal teaching of Mauritian, it will be possible to promote a standard form of the language. At school, children will learn how to write the "proper" form of Mauritian. Individual variations in the spelling system of Mauritian will, therefore, decrease and a single accepted form will be in use. The teaching of Mauritian at school will therefore add to the authoritative power of the language and turn it into a legitimate variety. Some respondents also believe that through the teaching of Mauritian, a spoken standard will be adopted by the population. Rehaz (20-39, IMH), resident in a rural area, claims that city-dwellers tend to look down on "rural Creole" (*kreol vilaz*). He thinks that the teaching of Mauritian in school will promote a homogeneous written and spoken form of the language. Indeed, he believes that for Mauritian to be taught as a subject, there should be an agreement as to what the standard form of the language is. Thus, all Mauritians, irrespective of their place of residence, would learn to speak and write a standard form of Mauritian and speakers would not be ridiculed because of their way of speaking Mauritian. Rehaz here ignores the fact that variation is part of spoken language and people cannot be forced into speaking the standard. He is reproducing a common discourse in linguistics, namely that variation is not part of grammar but is essentially a performance error. The spoken standard is more of an ideal than an actual fact (Milroy & Milroy 1991, Mugglestone 1995). Different varieties of spoken Mauritian will always exist, whether or not the language is taught at school. However, teaching the language at school could definitely help to promote a standard written form of the language.

Secondary-school students Krystel (13-19, CP) and Vanessa (13-19, AF) also oriented to the usefulness of a standard variety. They claim that if Mauritian had been taught at school, they would have "known how to write" the language (*nu ti pu kone ekrir kreol*). Dorothy (<13, AF) adopts a slightly different approach when she says that the teaching of Mauritian in school would help "kids whose parents only speak French to them to write (the language)" (*pu bane zenfan ki zot paren koz ek zot franse depi tipti kone ekrir*). Dorothy implies that it is only those non-native speakers of Mauritian who have to learn how to write the language. In other words, she assumes that those who can speak Mauritian instinctively know how to write the language (cf. Chapter 4). Dorothy – like Rehaz, Vanessa and Krystel – highlights the instrumental value of teaching Mauritian at school: teaching Mauritian at school will help promote literacy in the language.

Unlike these first two arguments, argument (3) has identificatory, rather than just practical, implications. As mentioned in Chapter 2 and section 5.1, oriental languages, which carry ethnic and/or religious meaning, are taught in primary school. Thus, Muslims, Hindus and Sino-Mauritians have the possibility of studying their ancestral and/or religious language. But those members of the General Population who identify with Mauritian or African languages do not have the same opportunity.

Three interviewees argued that Mauritian should be taught at school in the same way as the other "ancestral" languages like Hindi, Marathi, Urdu and Mandarin. Two of these respondents state that the education system should cater to the needs of all

ethnic groups. Josiane (40-59, AF), for instance, supports her arguments with the example of her own nine year-old son, Olivier. Since the initial official plan was to include oriental languages in the final CPE results as from 2004, all pupils were obliged to take an oriental language at primary level. Given that the choice of oriental language is ethnically-based, Creole and Coloured pupils do not have a language that they can easily choose – that is, *their* language is not offered as an option. Thus, they have to opt for another language, one which they cannot readily identify with and are not exposed to at home or in their ethnic community. Olivier's mother wanted him to study Hindi, a language known by a large segment of the Mauritian population, but Olivier preferred to choose Mandarin. His choice was based purely on the fact that his school-friends were mostly opting for this language. Josiane argues that those Sino-Mauritians who take Mandarin will have an edge over Olivier. Her rationale is that Mandarin is part of Chinese culture and thus, Sino-Mauritians have ready exposure to the language and consequently, would be more motivated to excel in the language. Since none of the oriental languages have any cultural relevance to the Creole child, this plan to include oriental language results in the final CPE grades can be seen as a form of injustice towards Creoles. Therefore, for someone like Josiane, the teaching of Mauritian would help in overcoming this perceived unfairness of the system by catering for the linguistic needs of all ethnic groups on the island.

While some respondents adopt an ethnic stance to this issue (also section 5.4 below), Yolande (40-59, AF) approaches the question from a "national" perspective. She states that Mauritians should promote *their* language in the education system. She

argues that in other countries, the national language is taught in school. Yolande quotes France and England where French and English, respectively, are taught and used as media of instruction. She declares that Mauritians are ashamed of their language, but they have no reason for adopting this attitude. "Why should we be ashamed to use our language?" *(Ki fer nou bizin onte pou servi nou la lang?)*, she asks. Yolande does not compare the teaching of Mauritian to that of oriental languages. For her, the Mauritian language is closely tied to the Mauritian identity, rather than the Creole one.

Different language ideologies and conceptions of identity are expressed here. What is clear in some of these responses is that the teaching of a language can be perceived as a socio-political move, rather than a pedagogical or utilitarian one. For those who think that Mauritian should be taught to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and that of a standard form of the language, the introduction of the language in school has utilitarian overtones. But for others, this move would clearly have a social meaning because the language is perceived as a token of ethnic and/or national identity. We come back to the role of Mauritian as a national and an ethnic language in Chapter 7. Below we discuss some of the reservations that interviewees have concerning the teaching of Mauritian.

5.3.2   Mauritian should be introduced in schools, but...

Eight respondents support the teaching of Mauritian at school while at the same time, expressing certain concerns on the issue. Two respondents argue that Mauritian should be offered as an option to all students, but it should not be taught as a

compulsory subject. Basically, the model endorsed here is that Mauritian would not have the same status as French and English, which are compulsory till the fifth and final years of secondary school, respectively. It would share the same status as the ancestral languages like Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Mandarin, which are currently offered as optional subjects to primary school students (similar position to that of Josiane in 5.3.1 above). According to Veronique (>59, FM),

Ex 5.1   *Je crois que d'apprendre plusieurs langues, c'est bien. Ce n'est surement pas mauvais. Mais imposer, je ne suis pas pour. Il faut laisser les gens libres de choisir.*
       I believe that it's good to learn many languages. It's definitely not bad. But I'm against imposing. People should be free to choose.

Learning Mauritian at school should therefore be a matter of personal choice. Dev (20-39, IMH) also sees the teaching of Mauritian at school as an asset. However, like Veronique, he adds that pupils should be free to decide whether or not they want to study Mauritian.

While Dev and Veronique treat Mauritian as a subject only, Babajee (20-39, IMH) underlines the benefit of Mauritian as a medium of instruction. He thinks that through Mauritian, children would "learn faster" (parallel with Nawshad in 5.3.1). However, he adds that before Mauritian can function as a medium of instruction, children would first have to learn the standard form of the language. This, he believes, poses a problem: the syllabus is already heavy and the introduction of Mauritian at this stage would only further add to the burden of children. Like Babajee, Dimitri (13-19, CP) supports the teaching of Mauritian in school. But he too believes that such a measure is possible only when a standardised version of the language has been created. These views show that "[graphicization] constitutes a

basic prerequisite for the use of language in education, in print, and in other realms of language functionality" (Adegbija 1993: 153). There are therefore practical and pedagogical obstacles to the introduction of Mauritian at school – as stated by Unesco (1953: 6).

Moreover, the fear that the teaching of Mauritian might negatively affect performance in other languages is explicitly brought out in Raymond's response.

Ex 5.2 Ce serait pas une mauvaise chose. Mais il faudrait pas que ce soit au détriment d'un sujet plus important. Parce que, est-ce que vraiment le Créole quand il apprend à l'école, est-ce qu'il peut vraiment traduire tout ce qu'il entend?
It wouldn't be a bad thing. But it shouldn't be at the expense of a more important subject. Because, does the Creole when he learns at school, can he really translate all that he hears?

Raymond puts forward a complex argument and blurs the distinction between *lang size* and *lang mediom*. He supports the introduction of Mauritian in the education system. But he argues that the introduction of Mauritian in school should not be done at the expense of other "more important" subjects. Raymond does not say what he means exactly by "important" subjects. Important subjects could be taken to mean those standard languages that can be used at international level. That is, although Mauritian is useful, it is not as important as other languages. Here, Mauritian seems to function as *lang size*. Raymond then goes on to suggest that Mauritian would make a useful medium of instruction. He thinks that the use of Mauritian in school might help some young Mauritians, especially the Creoles, improve their academic performance. Raymond's argument seems to rest on the assumption that the Creole child cannot fully understand the subjects that are taught to her in English. She has to translate this knowledge into her mother-tongue, Mauritian, in order to understand

and learn. Learning seems to involve hearing, translation and understanding. If the Creole child does not understand all that she hears, she cannot translate the information into her mother-tongue and process it. Therefore, the introduction of Mauritian in the school system might be beneficial to the Creole child in that it removes the need for translation and hence, makes comprehension easier. Thus, the introduction of Mauritian would target a specific ethnic group within the wider Mauritian community. Raymond's argument has clear ethnic implications.

Luximon (40-59, IMH) echoes Raymond when he questions the overall usefulness of the introduction of Mauritian in the education system. He is generally in favour of this measure but then thinks that in some ways, it might be better to learn international or "more important" languages. Luximon seems to suggest that the insularity of Mauritian is an obstacle to its promotion in the education sector. Raymond and Luximon, therefore, highlight the position of Mauritian in the local and international social and linguistic hierarchies: Mauritian is at the lower end of these hierarchies. Mauritian has a local and hence, bounded quality: it is restricted to Mauritius. In contrast, other languages like English and French have a more open quality in that they are international languages. In other words, while Mauritian symbolises localness, the European languages mark internationalness. The absence of the Mauritian language on the international level is often quoted as a reason against the teaching of the language, as shown in the paragraphs below.

5.3.3   Mauritian should not be introduced in schools

Those who believe that Mauritian should not be introduced in school form a majority group in this corpus. Sixteen interviewees object to the introduction of Mauritian in school on the grounds that it is not an international language. The general belief is that students would make more efficient use of their time by learning international languages rather than Mauritian. The arguments underline the limited scope for use of Mauritian outside Mauritius. That is, learning Mauritian at school would not bring any material advantage to Mauritians on the international level. In fact, it could even hamper the progress of Mauritians who would be closed to the outside world because of communication barriers. The argument is usually put in the following ways: "the teaching of Mauritian in school would not lead us anywhere" (*pa pu amene nu auken par*), "it is not a passport to the world" (*li pa ene paspor pu le mond).* To support their arguments, many of these interviewees compare Mauritian with languages such as French, English, Hindi or Mandarin – which are "openings" to the world (*ouvertir lor le monde*).

Prince (40-59, IMH), for instance, claims

Ex 5.3 Pa vo la peine. Li pa pou amene nou aukene par avek sa. Si ene zenfan pe lir ene franse, li pe kapav al dan la France. Ou bien li pe lir angle, hindi, urdu, li pe kapav debruye dan nimport ki pai. Ou bien bane langaz kouma mandarin, tamil, telugu tou sala. Sa ban zafer ki bisin introduir. Mo pa truv li ene necessite introduir kreol.
It's not worth [introducing Mauritian in school]. We can't go anywhere with it. If a child learns French, she can go to France. Or if she learns English, Hindi, Urdu, she can find her way in any country. Or such languages as Mandarin, Tamil, Telugu, all these. These are the things that have to be introduced. I don't find it necessary to introduce Creole.

His comparison with English, French, Mandarin, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu and Hindi serves to emphasise the insularity of Mauritian. It is interesting that he also mentions Mandarin, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu and Hindi. First, it shows that Mauritian is not compared to English and French only, but to all other international languages. Second, it suggests that even those oriental languages taught at school have "international" value. Third, by mentioning Mandarin and other oriental languages alongside his own ethnic language, Hindi, Prince might be suggesting that he is adopting an overall unbiased non-ethnic, i.e., objective, approach. He does not limit himself to his own ethnic group. That is, he does not only refer to languages that he uses and identifies with. He also includes other ethnic groups' languages, thereby asserting that the introduction of Mauritian in the school system will be detrimental to all groups – not just to Hindus. In some ways, his approach makes his argument stronger in that it implicitly includes all groups within the Mauritian community.

Similar attitudes are expressed in the younger age-groups. Saroj (20-39, IMH), for instance, clearly questions the purpose of teaching Mauritian. Her response takes the form of a question: *Pour faire quoi avec?* ("To do what with it?"). Eric (FM), in the same age-group as Saroj, believes that Mauritian is only useful for "internal communication" (*communication interne*). As such, it is useless to invest in its teaching. Mauritian is seen as an obstacle to progress at the international level. This, according to Sabah (13-19, IMM), especially poses a problem to the younger generations. Indeed, she argues that in this era of globalisation, it is important to teach languages that can act as openings on the world. And Mauritian is not such a language.

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Ex 5.4 Creole in itself is not the language that we're using universally. We have to take into consideration the fact that we're living into an era of globalisation. If we stay backward with our Creole, using it as an official language or even in our education, there wouldn't be much future for our youth, the youth of tomorrow.

Teaching Mauritian in schools is a way of restricting the progress of Mauritian youth, of keeping them "backward". For Sabah and the respondents just mentioned, the introduction of Mauritian in schools is seen as a barrier to the socio-economic progress of Mauritians and should consequently, be opposed. In other words, my interviewees do not see any tangible gains in acquiring literacy in Mauritian. On the contrary, they think that such a move will be detrimental to them.

Moreover, eleven interviewees argue that Mauritian should not be taught because it has no structure, no grammar and no proper vocabulary. The respondents seem to be orienting to the non-standardness issue again. Mauritian is not perceived as a stable or regular system and therefore, is not appropriate in the school domain. These arguments highlight the intrinsic "flaws" of Mauritian. Some respondents adopt an extreme form of this argument and claim that Mauritian is not even a proper language. Hence, it cannot and should not be taught in schools. Yamesh (40-59, IMH), for instance, believes that it is "degrading" (*degradan*) to teach Mauritian in school. Mée (>59, FM) endorses Yamesh's view when she says that Mauritian is of a "lower class" (*d'une basse classe*) and has no structure. Therefore, it should not be taught. On his side, Ram (40-59, IMH) wonders how the authorities could even consider teaching a variety that is not even a language (he expresses similar attitudes to the promotion of literacy in Mauritian in *ex 4.4*, Chapter 4).These arguments clearly emphasise the negative attitudes to Mauritian which is seen as a dialect or a

low-status variety. Education is seen as a mean to social progress and Mauritian, unlike other languages, is not capable of bringing about social development. Therefore, it should not be introduced in school.

In the cases quoted above, Mauritian is considered as both a subject and a medium of instruction. For example, it is "useless" to learn a (broken) local language and also to learn in a (broken) local language. In the following examples, "teaching Mauritian" is only interpreted as teaching Mauritian as a subject. Many respondents argue that Mauritians grow up speaking Mauritian. Therefore, there is no reason to introduce it into the education system. The interviewees here ignore the fact that in many countries, like France, Italy and India, children are taught their mother-tongue at school. They study their mother-tongue as a subject despite the fact that they grow up speaking the language. Therefore, in Mauritius as well, it should theoretically be possible for young native speakers of Mauritian to study their native language at school. But in order to rationalise their ideologies, respondents seem to ignore certain facts – or maybe they are not aware of them.

Interviewees suggested that in the Mauritian context, it is better to devote resources to the acquisition of languages other than Mauritian. Here again, the comparison is drawn with English and French. Ashmita (13-19, IMH) thinks that it would be more sensible to study languages such as English, French or Hindi instead of learning a language that "we already know" (*nu deza kone*). For these interviewees, Mauritian is a language that Mauritians do not have to learn because the language is automatically acquired or "picked up" (Zain, 20-39, IMM) – either at home or

through exposure to other Mauritians. Ashmita and Zain expose widely-held views in creole-speaking communities. In many creole-speaking communities, people see "no reason whatsoever to teach the children Creole, a language "which they already [know]" (or even a language that they did not even consider to be a language)" (Bollée 1993: 89).

By foregrounding this line of reasoning, the interviewees implicitly advance a case that Mauritian is only a spoken language. Unlike spoken language, written language, i.e., orthography, has to be formally learnt. In the Mauritian context, literacy in Mauritian does not come automatically with exposure to a Mauritian-speaking environment. Writing in Mauritian still has to be learnt. As Gerbault (1997: 149) puts it, "Children will normally acquire a language regardless of their social environment, but the acquisition of literacy usually involves conscious teaching and learning". This fact is effaced when interviewees argue that all Mauritians automatically know Mauritian. They restrict their argument to spoken Mauritian and overlook the acquisition of literacy in the language.

The possibility of a negative influence of Mauritian on English and French is also quoted as a reason against the introduction of the language at school. Some interviewees even argue that the teaching of Mauritian at school would deter students from learning English and French. Since Mauritian is "easier" than English and French, students would prefer focusing on the former and would be less motivated to learn the latter two languages. Clearly respondents who make this point are assuming that Mauritian would be taught as an alternative to other languages rather

than a medium of instruction. Five interviewees believe that the teaching of Mauritian would adversely affect performance in other languages, especially French. Mona (40-59, IMH), a primary-school teacher, argues that pupils would develop a "strong Mauritian accent when talking French". That is, Mauritian children would not be able to speak "proper" French because of the influence of Mauritian phonology. Proper French is taken to mean the French spoken by the French people (the French language seems to be treated as one idealised variety in which dialectal variations are ignored). In short then, the teaching of Mauritian is again perceived as a deterrent for students to learn other "more useful and more important" languages. The practical usefulness or pedagogical importance of learning Mauritian itself is not a consideration. On the contrary, most of these interviewees believe that no benefit can be gained from learning Mauritian at school.

Even in the education system, therefore, Mauritian is set in opposition to other languages (chapters 2 and 4). Its position or status is defined with respect to that of other varieties. This way of defining the creole variety underlines the negativity attached to the language. For instance, compared to French and English, the two main languages taught in Mauritius, Mauritian is not an international language, has no set orthography, no world–recognised literature and is easily acquired. Compared to the international languages, therefore, it seems futile to allocate limited resources for the teaching of this language at school. This is the line of reasoning adopted by many interviewees. To them, it is more logical to spend the resources on English and French instead of Mauritian – a language that all Mauritians automatically acquire.

These attitudes serve to firmly establish creoles at the bottom of the linguistic hierarchy.

Interviewees' attitudes are, by no means, unique to the Mauritian context. Although responses seem objective in nature, they in fact highlight some of the Eurocentric beliefs prevalent in post-colonial nations. Phillipson (1992) shows how inhabitants of post-colonial countries have been made to believe that English is better than their own indigenous languages. Thus, the people themselves support the use of English in their school system. By so doing, they reflect colonial attitudes to their local languages. Phillipson (1992: 185) argues that English Language Teaching (ELT) programmes are based on these five false anglocentric tenets: English is best taught monolingually; the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker; the earlier English is taught, the better the results; the more English is taught, the better the results; and if other languages are used much, standards of English will drop. We can see echoes of some of these tenets in the responses quoted above. Mauritians, therefore, seem conditioned to support the use of European languages in the education sector – at the expense of their own mother-tongue. In fact, not only is the mother-tongue seen as an obstacle to the acquisition of useful knowledge, but it is further denigrated as not even a proper language. These negative attitudes towards Mauritian and positive ones towards English have effectively maintained the linguistic status quo in the education system and preserved colonial language policies.

It should be pointed out that the aim has never been to make Mauritian the only medium of instruction in schools or to remove the other languages from the

curriculum. In fact, the importance of other languages like English and French has never been denied by linguists and pedagogues. The plan is for English to remain the medium of instruction for the whole of secondary school and French to be taught as a subject. Some interviewees overlook this and are afraid that Mauritians will end up in a linguistic and social ghetto. It is feared that Mauritians will not be fluent in English and therefore, will not be able to compete on the world scene. The attitudes of these interviewees can be understood in terms of a desire to progress, a desire for the youth to have a "future" (Sabah in *ex 5.4*). Like other creole-speaking and African communities, Mauritius is a small country without much power on the international level. As such, it does not have much choice but to follow global trends. To be able to participate in socio-economic progress, inhabitants of 'non-influential' nations need to adapt and adopt the strategies of powerful and dominant nations. Power differentials, therefore, can lead to the adoption of new coping strategies – including linguistic ones, e.g., the adoption of English as the language of education.

On the world market, English has the most socio-economic power and hence, is clearly a tool of socio-economic advancement. In contrast, Mauritian, the local creole, cannot help in promoting the socio-economic interests of its users. Language is here seen as a commodity (Heller 2003) that can be used for social or economic gains. Knowledge of English is a commodity that can be marketed. Through linguistic commodification, language becomes a measurable skill (2003: 474). Interviewees like Sabah use the hegemonic language English as an instrument of social progress. This does not necessarily mean that they actively support the supremacy of English or endorse the values associated with English. They could be

employing the "avoidance strategy" (Canagarajah 2000: 124). That is, it could be that they are just learning the language of upward mobility and using it to their advantage. They avoid giving any identificatory meaning to English. As such, this language might not pose any threat to their own identity. However, it could also be argued that by adopting English, inhabitants of less powerful nations are legitimising the domination of English and hence, perpetuating the ideologies of power. But all my interviewees willingly adopt English as the language of economic progress. In other words, none of my interviewees explicitly associate English with domination and oppression. They only see it as a tool of economic progress, devoid of any cultural values – much as Stein (1982) asserted (Chapter 2).

5.4 Introduction of Mauritian in schools and ethnicity

The forty-four interviewees who oppose the use of Mauritian at school are from all the different ethnic categories. Table 5.2 below shows the distribution of interviewees by ethnicity and attitudes to the introduction of Mauritian in school.

A chi-square test was performed on a simplified version of Table 5.2. For the purposes of these calculations, the "no opinion" responses were excluded and the "yes, with reservations" responses were conflated with the "yes" responses. The test revealed that ethnicity was a significant factor in influencing attitudes to the introduction of Mauritian in school ($\chi^2 = 15.3$ (to 3 significant figures); degrees of freedom = 4; $p \leq 0.01$. Therefore, the distribution is significant).

	Should Mauritian be introduced in schools?				
	Yes	Yes, with reservations	No	No opinion	Total
Indo-Mauritian Hindus	1	4	18	1	24
Indo-Mauritian Muslims	5	1	16	5	27
Afro-Mauritians	9	0	1	1	11
Franco-Mauritians	0	2	3	2	7
Coloured Population/ Mixed	3	1	6	0	10
Total	18	8	44	9	79

Table 5.2. Respondents by ethnicity and attitudes to the introduction of Mauritian in school.
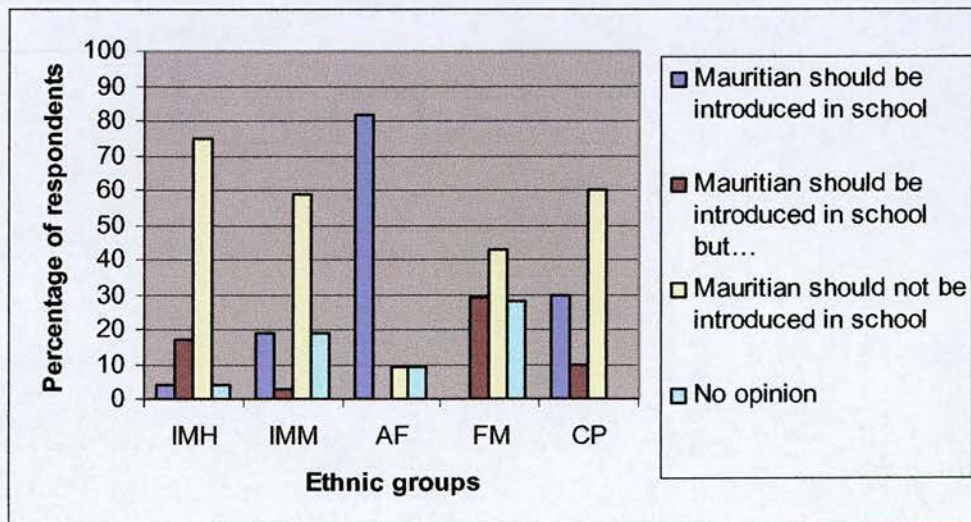
Figure 5.2. Percentage of respondents by ethnicity and attitudes to the introduction of Mauritian in school.

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Figure 5.2 clearly shows that proportionately more Afro-Mauritians are in favour of the introduction of Mauritian in the education system than other ethnic groups. Eighty-two percent of the Afro-Mauritians in this study are openly for this measure. It is also in this small group that the lowest percentage of disapproval can be noted: 9%. None of the Franco-Mauritians interviewed in this study think that Mauritian should be introduced unconditionally. Twenty-nine percent are partly favourable to the teaching of the language in schools but express some concerns and reservations while 43% are clearly against this measure. Even if no Franco-Mauritian in this study is completely convinced that Mauritian should be taught in school, this group does not show the greatest hostility to the language.

The highest opposition to the introduction of Mauritian in school can be observed among the Hindus: 75% do not want Mauritian to be taught, while only 4% back this measure totally and 17% do so with some reservations. High levels of disagreement can also be observed among the Coloured Population and Muslims questioned in this study: 60% and 59%, respectively.

Even though most members of the Coloured Population interviewed are against the introduction of Mauritian in school, 30% totally approve of this measure while 10% are agreeable but express some reservations. The Coloured Mauritians in this study, therefore, represent the second group, after the Afro-Mauritians, most favourable to the teaching of Mauritian in school. They are followed by the Muslims (19%) and the Hindus (4%). Table 5.3 ranks the five ethnic groups according to the responses that

they give concerning the introduction of Mauritian in school (it excludes percentages for the "no opinion" responses in Table 5.2).

The most important differences among the ethnic groups can be observed in the "yes"-responses with the percentage of approvals ranging from an impressive 82% to (an equally impressive) 0%. There is a sharp fall from the first highest rate of approval to the second one. Given that my corpus is small, we cannot make any sweeping generalisations. But the percentages in Table 5.3 clearly show that Afro-Mauritians, those also known as Creoles, generally support the introduction of Mauritian at school while non-Creoles generally oppose this move.

Responses	Ranking of ethnic groups				
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Yes	AF	CP	IMM	IMH	FM
	(82%)	(30%)	(19%)	(4%)	(0%)
Yes, with reservations	FM	IMH	CP	IMM	AF
	(29%)	(17%)	(10%)	(3%)	(0%)
No	IMH	CP	IMM	FM	AF
	(75%)	(60%)	(59%)	(43%)	(9%)

Table 5.3. Ranking of ethnic groups on the basis of responses concerning introduction of Mauritian in school

It is possible that Afro-Mauritians are more supportive of the use of Mauritian at school because of the ethnic/ancestral value that they attach to the language. Josiane, quoted in 5.3.1 above, made the link between Creole identity and Mauritian language explicit. As a Creole, she feels disadvantaged with respect to other ethnolinguistic groups. Josiane is not the only Creole in this study who expresses such an attitude

towards the teaching of Mauritian in school. Lourdes and Françoise also believe that "all languages have to be taught" (*bisin montrer tou lang*). Françoise argues that "the others have their languages" (*ban lezot ena zot lang*), while she does not have hers. She sets herself in opposition to the others who have their ancestral languages taught at school. In some sense, Françoise suggests that the Creoles, represented by herself, are disadvantaged with respect to other ethnic groups. She, therefore, gives an ethnic connotation to the language-in-education issue. The other Afro-Mauritians put forward non-ethnic responses, e.g., Yolande, quoted in 5.3, adopts a "national" approach to the question. Also, Jean-Claude (40-59, AF) is the only Creole in this study who opposes the introduction of Mauritian in the education system. He believes that Mauritian cannot be introduced at this stage because it is not standardised.

Furthermore, no Franco-Mauritian unconditionally supports the teaching of Mauritian. While Veronique (>59) believes that Mauritian should be taught as an optional subject, Raymond (40-59) argues that Mauritian should not be taught at the expense of other subjects. Raymond's argument (*ex 5.2* in section 5.3.2) has an ethnic undertone in that he suggests that children of Creole ethnicity are not as competent in French and English as other groups. Raymond has a tendency to associate Mauritian with Creoles (e.g., chapters 6 and 7). He sees Mauritian as primarily the language of Creoles. Hence, the introduction of Mauritian at school could help in the socio-economic promotion of Creoles. The association between Mauritian and Creoles is also brought out in the response of Gladys who opposes the

introduction of the language at school. Her argument is simple: she wonders whether the "Creoles themselves would want to learn Mauritian".

Ex 5.5 Est-ce que les Créoles eux-memes, est-ce qu'ils voudront apprendre cette langue? Ils preferront peut-être apprendre la langue française, ou bien la langue anglaise.
Will the Creoles themselves, will they want to learn this language? They will probably prefer learning the French language, or the English language.

In her response, Gladys does not even mention other ethnic groups. She seems to see Mauritian as primarily relevant to Creole pupils. Her response is further evidence that Mauritian is identified with the Creoles, and hence, any measure to promote the language will necessarily involve the Creoles (and possibly only them). In Chapter 7, we will return to Gladys' view of Mauritian and the Creole ethnic group. Here, she suggests that those very people affected by this measure would not want to learn Mauritian. Instead, they would prefer French or English, i.e., the languages of upward social mobility. According to Gladys and other interviewees, formal education provides a basis for socio-economic advancement in later life. Since English and French are international languages, they provide more opportunities for advancement. Therefore, they are appropriate in school. But in Mauritius, ancestral languages are taught alongside English and French although they do not have the same international importance as these two European languages. Ancestral languages are taught because of their cultural and emotional value (also Chapter 7). In the same way, it could be argued that Mauritian which is the ancestral language of the Creoles has a place in the education system. This appears to be Gladys' line of reasoning. But then she goes on to question the usefulness of teaching Mauritian since the Creoles themselves will not want to learn the language. From Gladys' perspective, it seems that nobody will want to learn Mauritian and therefore, it is useless to teach the

language at school. Other arguments put forward by the Franco-Mauritians are non-ethnic and centre around the inherent flaws of the language and its limited use outside Mauritius (e.g, Mée >59 and Eric 20-39).

Moreover, three of the ten Coloured People in this corpus support the introduction of Mauritian at school either because it will help in the promotion of a standard (Krystel 13-19) or in the acquisition of other subjects (Robert 40-59 and Kevin 13-19). Four Coloured People oppose the introduction of Mauritian at school on the grounds that it is not an international and/or a standard language (e.g., Sarah 20-39, Frances >59) and also, that the teaching of Mauritian can have negative influences on the standards of French (Pauline, 40-59). Tonton (>59) is the only Coloured Person who adopts an ethnic approach to this question. He is clearly against the teaching of Mauritian at school. For him, Mauritian is a "deformation of the French language" (*une déformation de la langue française*). He feels that the Government want to impose the language on the nation. But then he adds that the teaching of Mauritian will be beneficial to the Creole child.

Ex 5.6 *Pour la population Créole, la population de Maurice, ça pourrait les aider. Parce qu'ils parlent Créole chez eux (…) Moi, je suis contre*
For the Creole population, for the population of Mauritius, this could help them. Because they speak Creole at home (…) As for me, I am against.

He first associates Mauritian with the Creole population and then the Mauritian population. Here again, we see the primary link between Mauritian and the Creole ethnic group. The educational performance of Creoles might be improved by the presence of Mauritian in the education system. The Creoles are therefore the targeted group for the introduction of Mauritian in school. We see here the relationship

between academic success and language on the one hand, and ethnicity and language, on the other. It is assumed that for the Creoles to succeed in the academic field, they need "help": the inclusion of their language in the education system might "help" them to improve their academic performance. Tonton's response evokes some of the stereotypes regarding the Creoles' low academic achievements (Chapter 2).

As for the Muslims in this corpus, the majority tend to reject the use of Mauritian in school. Practical reasons are given for this rejection. These include the ones already discussed: the limited scope for use of Mauritian outside the island, the fact that all Mauritians know the language from childhood, the belief that Mauritian has no standard orthography and no proper structure and also, the fact that the primary school syllabus is already heavy. No Muslim in this corpus rejects or supports the introduction of Mauritian on ethnic grounds. The Muslims who support the teaching of Mauritian believe that the language will render learning easier (e.g., Nawshad 20-39, Dawood 40-59) or facilitate the creation and promotion of a standard (Rehaz 20-39). Muslims' attitudes towards the use of Mauritian at school, therefore, are phrased in practical rather than identificatory terms. Their ideologies differ from those of the General Population and resemble those of the Hindu group.

Proportionately, Hindus show the greatest opposition to the teaching of Mauritian at school. Like their Muslim counterparts, Hindus put forward practical arguments against the teaching of the language. For instance, Gallina (20-39) believes that

Ex 5.7 Pa neceser vine fluen dan kreol. To trouver, pena mem vokabiler, gramer (…) Li pa pou servi twa, li ene perte de tem.

It is not necessary to be fluent in Mauritian. You see, it does not even have a vocabulary, a grammar (…) It won't of any use to you, it's a waste of time.

For Hindus as well, the low prestige of Mauritian, what they perceive to be its intrinsic linguistic defects, its inferiority with respect to the European languages and its insular character are powerful reasons against the use of the "language" as a medium of instruction and its formal teaching. The reservations put forward by Hindus are also couched in practical rather than ethnic terms (e.g., Babajee in section 5.3.2 above, also Verena).

One Hindu, Mona, views the introduction of Mauritian at school with suspicion. She believes that those who want to adopt this measure speak French and/or English at home. That is, they make sure that their own children have access to the prestigious languages while other children are limited to insular Mauritian. She believes that Mauritian hinders socio-economic progress and even interferes with performance in other languages (section 5.3.3). She highlights the ideologies of power associated with languages. The promotion of Mauritian in the education system, therefore, becomes a linguistic and above all, political tool, to promote the interests of the dominant groups and keep the other groups away from progress. She says that the promoters want to have Mauritian, the language of the disempowered, in school so that the other pupils will be less competitive than their own. Mona does not explicitly state who the promoters of Mauritian are. It could be the Hindu-dominated Government or even the pro-Creole groups. But, the point remains that the promoters or policy-makers are serving their own interests. Indeed, their attempts can be seen as a means of subjugating the population so that they can maintain their economic and

social domination of the population. We can see here how the promotion of Mauritian by the elites serves to reinforce boundaries between them and the other groups. Her views parallel those expressed by Frances regarding the promotion of written Mauritian (*ex 4.19* in section 4.7, Chapter 4). Both interviewees feel threatened by what they perceive to be a dominant group's linguistic policy. Hence, they both place the promotion of Mauritian within a political framework. Because they do not have a say on linguistic matters, Mona and Frances have no choice but to abide by the powerful group's decisions.

Leaving aside the Afro-Mauritians, most ethnic groups represented in this study seem to oppose the teaching of Mauritian at school or have some doubts on the issue. Although some respondents see the teaching of Mauritan as a tool to promote or hinder the interests of some ethnic groups, most tackle the issue from a practical or pedagogical perspective. That is, most of the arguments put forward are non-ethnic in nature. The position of the Afro-Mauritians in Table 5.3 confirms that ethnicity does have a role to play in determining attitudes to the use of Mauritian at school. Notwithstanding the small size of the corpus, it seems that we could be looking at a Creole/non-Creole dichotomy.

Even though my interviewees generally adopt a non-ethnic approach to the issue, recent newspaper articles show that some members of the general public seem to address the language-in-education question from a solely ethnic perspective. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the choice of "ancestral" language at primary level is ethnically marked in that ethnic groups choose the language that they identify with.

Some groups had even written to the Government to ask for the inclusion of Mauritian in the school curriculum. In a meeting in February, the representatives of the Creole groups *Muvman Mobilisation Kréol Afrikin* (MMKA), *Plate-forme pour l'Unité des Créoles* and *Mouvman Bienet Kreol Roche-Bois* (MBKRB) asked Creole children not to opt for an oriental language until the Governmental decision regarding the place of Mauritian was made clear (*Week-end* 08 February 2004). The spokesman of MBKRB, Stephano Sockalingum, argues that "[it is] unfair that a community representing more than 30% of the population, namely the Creole population, cannot have their own ancestral and maternal language at school while others have theirs"[11] (*Le Mauricien* 15 March 2004). Sockalingum makes it clear that the Creoles make up an important proportion of the population, yet their linguistic rights are ignored. The Creoles are therefore a dominated group although they form a significant part of the Mauritian population. He draws a distinction between the Creoles and the non-Creoles. The dominated and disempowered position of the Creoles is highlighted: while the non-Creoles have their "ancestral and maternal" language at school, the Creoles do not. Of course, since the majority of Mauritians speak Mauritian as their first language at home, Sockalingum overlooks the fact that most Mauritians do not actually have their maternal language taught at school. He provides a voice from within the Creole community itself that constructs a sense of Mauritian belonging in some special way to the Creoles – this ownership issue is addressed in Chapter 7. It could be that for the MBKRB, the maternal language of the "others" corresponds to their ancestral language – as is the case for the Creoles (Chapter 7). For groups like MBKRB and MMKA, Mauritian functions clearly as an index of Creole ethnicity. Mauritian's role as the native language of the majority of Mauritians, including non-Creoles, tends to be backgrounded. In Chapter 7, we look

at the competing discourses on the functions of Mauritian. What is important here is the association between language-in-education policies and Creole ethnicity and also, the way in which some groups feel marginalised because of the linguistic policies in the education system. The discussion in this section further shows the interaction between language and politics of identity in Mauritius.

In the next section, we turn to a detailed examination of the usage of Mauritian by head-teachers in primary and secondary schools in Mauritius.

5.5 The head-teacher and Mauritian

Head-teachers occupy the highest position in the school hierarchy. They are figures of authority and are respected by both students and teachers. They are in charge of school administration. Some head-teachers also teach a few hours per week. Their main roles are to ensure the smooth running of the school and the well-being of students and teachers and to maintain discipline. They are also the link between the school and authorities or organisations that run the school – e.g., the Ministry of Education in the case of public schools. Usually, the head-teacher addresses the students before they proceed to their classes in the morning. This morning assembly can, therefore, be considered as a formal situation. A variety of languages could be used in the school assembly. However, reports from interviewees and students suggest that French is most often used in this domain. English is sometimes used.

Furthermore, since Mauritian is not an official language and is not deemed appropriate for use in the school setting, we would not expect it to be used by the

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head of the school in the assembly. Interviewees in this study were asked what their impression would be if they heard a head-teacher using Mauritian in the school assembly. The purpose of this question is to tap into the interviewees' attitudes towards use of Mauritian by a figure of authority in a formal situation. Their responses are recorded in Table 5.4 below. The reactions are grouped under "Good", "Bad", "Depends" and "no opinion".

Interviewees		Impression if head-teacher uses Mauritian in school assembly				Total
		Good	Bad	Depends	No opinion	
<13 yrs of age	M	1	0	0	1	2
	F	1	0	0	1	2
13-19	M	2	0	1	4	7
	F	0	4	1	1	6
20-39	M	6	6	2	2	16
	F	2	3	5	1	11
40-59	M	4	4	2	1	11
	F	3	3	2	2	10
>59	M	0	2	0	1	3
	F	2	1	2	6	11
Total		21	23	15	20	79

Table 5.4. Respondents by age group, gender and attitudes to the use of Mauritian in the school assembly.
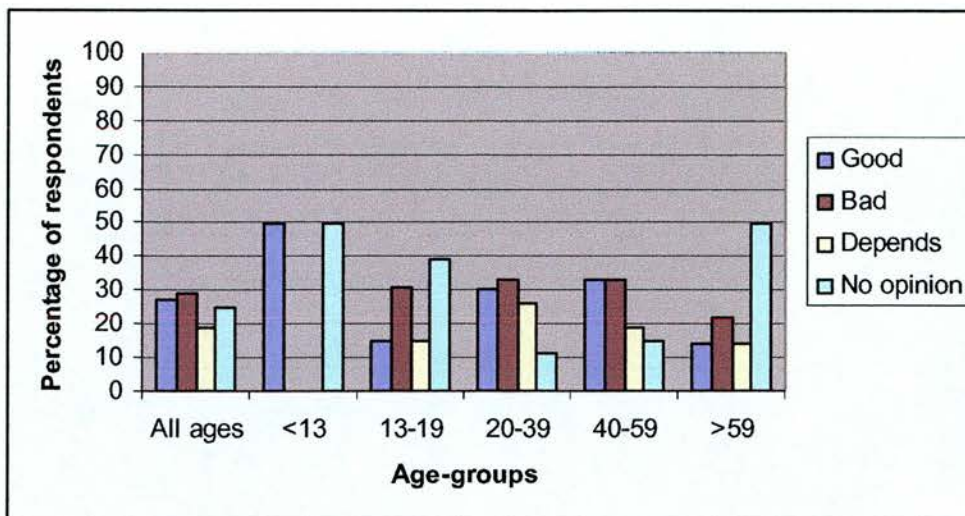
Figure 5.3. Percentage of respondents by age-group and attitudes to the use of Mauritian in the school assembly.

Figure 5.3 shows that more than 25% of the people interviewed do not have any opinion concerning the use of Mauritian in the school assembly. The highest percentage of "no opinion" can be found among the youngest and oldest age-groups: 50% of those aged below 13 and above 59 do not express any attitude towards the use of Mauritian in the school assembly. Table 5.4 and Figure 5.3 show that the most common responses are those expressing disagreement towards the use of Mauritian in the school setting: 29% overall (0% for the youngest group, 31% for the 13-19 group, 33% for the 20-39 and 40-59 groups and 21% for the >59 group). However, positive responses are also fairly common: 27% (50% for the youngest group, 15% for the 13-19 group, 30% for the 20-39 group, 33% for the 40-59 group and 14% for the oldest group). Interestingly, 19% of interviewees argue that their views regarding the use of Mauritian in school assemblies would differ according to various factors – these will be discussed in the paragraphs below.

We first consider the reasons for the straightforward "good" and "bad" impressions. The single reason put forward in support of the use of Mauritian in the school

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assembly is comprehension (e.g., Dorothy <13, AF; Kevin 13-19, CP; Ashwin 20-39, IMH; Saheeda, 40-59, IMM; Nima, >59, IMM). The interviewees who favour the use of Mauritian by the head-teacher argue that this is the only language accessible to all pupils, unlike English and French. Three respondents specify that the use of Mauritian would be especially beneficial to the youngest children. As mentioned in Chapter 2, 80% of the children who join school speak Mauritian at home. Therefore, these young children would understand the assembly better if it is performed in their mother-tongue. Jean-Claude (40-59, AF) further argues that children could learn French or English in the classroom. But in the school assembly, he believes that it is more sensible to use the language that they are most familiar with. Also, the function of the school assembly is not to teach children languages. Thus, the assembly and the classroom serve different purposes and constitute two distinct domains of use. These twenty-one interviewees, therefore, do not think that it is wrong or improper for the head of the school to use Mauritian in the school assembly. In fact, they support the use of the language in this domain. For them, Mauritian should be automatically chosen over English and French as it is the most known language in the Mauritian context. Thus, it could be claimed that more than 25% of the interviewees in this study show a positive attitude towards the use of Mauritian by a figure of authority in the formal school assembly setting.

The reasons put forward by those who think that it is inappropriate for a head-teacher to use Mauritian in a school assembly can be grouped in the following two categories:

1. the need to educate children

2. the low prestige of Mauritian

Nineteen interviewees argue that children go to school in order to be educated and not to learn Mauritian. Since education is in French and English, the head-teacher has to use these languages in the school assembly. For instance, Rehaz (20-39, IMM), a student, and Frances (>59, CP), a retired gentleman, both believe that it is not proper for a head-teacher to use Mauritian as he/she should set the right example by making the correct language choice. For them, as a figure of authority and role-model, the head-teacher has the duty to promote proper linguistic behaviour. The norm is to use French or English at school and not Mauritian. Nawshad (20-39, IMM), who supports the introduction of Mauritian in school, states that it is not currently appropriate for a head-teacher to use Mauritian as the children are being taught mostly in French in the classroom (section 2.5, Chapter 2). There should, therefore, be a consistency between what is allowed in the classroom and what the head of the school uses. The use of Mauritian in the school assembly is seen as "a breach to the school setting protocol" (Zain, 20-39, IMM) which bans the use of Mauritian, especially in an assembly – a formal domain – by a head-teacher – a figure of authority. It seems that here the classroom and the school assembly are considered as the same domain of use.

Furthermore, some interviewees claim that they would have a negative impression of a head-teacher who uses a low variety like Mauritian in a school assembly. Four interviewees believe that Mauritian is not a "proper language" to be used in the school setting and most importantly, by a head-teacher. The intrinsic "flaws" of Mauritian are again highlighted. Suresh (40-59, IMH), for instance, claims that as a

figure of authority (*ene gran dimun* – "a person occupying an important position"), the head-teacher should maintain his status (*bizin gard so grad*) and consequently, not use Mauritian. The inappropriateness of using a low variety like Mauritian is clearly underlined in Eric's statement where he says that a head-teacher who uses Mauritian "is restricting himself to something very low" (*il se limite à quelquechose de très bas*). To him, Mauritian is not a refined and elaborate language *(pas un langage travaillé*) and it is impossible for this language to be used at school. Ashmita, a young student, finds it "ridiculous" (*ridikul*) for the head of the school to use Mauritian in the assembly. According to her, French and/or English should be used. The unsuitability of a head-teacher using Mauritian in a school setting can clearly be observed in these views. This highlights the fact that people tend to be reluctant to allowing Mauritian in the school environment and also, that there are linguistic expectations on the head-teacher. Mauritian does not befit the school setting.

Fifteen interviewees give more nuanced views regarding the use of Mauritian by the head-teacher in a school assembly. They state that their attitude to the head-teacher would depend on various factors:

1. age-group of the pupils

2. location of the school

3. social and ethnic background of the pupils

4. style of Mauritian used

A third of these interviewees state that they think it proper for a head-teacher to use Mauritian in a school assembly where there are young children. Raymond, for

instance, argues that the head of the school should convey a message in such a way that it is accessible to all children (*faut que le message passe* – "the message must get across"). For him, the function of the assembly is not to teach languages but to convey messages in an intelligible manner. Many Mauritians would only have had limited exposure to French and English by the time they join school. Hence, in the first year or first few years of schooling, many young children are fully competent in Mauritian only. That is why, according to some interviewees, the age of the pupils has to be taken into consideration before deciding which language to use in a school assembly.

Six of the fifteen interviewees suggest that their attitudes and impressions would differ depending on the location of the school. In Mauritius, there are differences between rural and urban (public) schools in terms of the background of the children enrolled. In rural areas, children tend to be of lower social and economic classes. Schools found in the outskirts of towns also tend to have children of poorer backgrounds. On the other hand, children attending schools in urban areas are usually of middle-class backgrounds. The location of the school can, therefore, partly determine the social class of the children – factors 2 and 3 above are hence related. Some of my interviewees suggest that it would be sensible for head-teachers of rural or poor regions to use Mauritian in the school assembly. As noted in Chapter 2, middle-class parents increasingly tend to use French and/or English at home so that their children have a headstart at school. Their children are thus exposed to the languages of education from a very young age; whereas children of lower classes are more likely to use only Mauritian at home. Therefore, the use of Mauritian in a

school assembly with many children of lower classes is acceptable for comprehensibility reasons.

Furthermore, the ethnicity of pupils can justify the use of Mauritian in the school assembly. For example, if the majority of children in a school are Franco-Mauritians, it is illogical for the head-teacher to use Mauritian in the assembly. Most, if not all, Franco-Mauritian parents use French at home. When Franco-Mauritian children join school, their exposure to French might in fact be far greater than their exposure to Mauritian. In contrast, an Afro-Mauritian or Indo-Mauritian child coming from a rural region is more likely to have been exposed to Mauritian (and an ancestral language) than French or English. Therefore, when these children join school, their knowledge of French and English is limited or non-existent. In such a situation, some of the respondents would not find it improper for the head-teacher to use Mauritian in the assembly. Emie (>59, FM) specifically mentions that if most of the pupils in a school are Creoles, then she would have no objection to the head-teacher using Mauritian in the assembly:

Ex 5.8 S'il y a une majorité de population créole, j'accepterai. Mais si c'est un mélange, peut-être que ce serait pas acceptable. Mais s'ils sont en majorité, ce serait facile pour eux.
If the majority is of Creole origin, I'll accept. But if it's a mixed population, maybe it won't be acceptable. But if they're in majority, it'll be easy for them.

For some interviewees, therefore, the ethnic and social background of the pupils is important in determining whether the use of Mauritian is accepted or condemned in the school assembly. Use of Mauritian is accepted in a school with a large Creole population for intelligibility reasons.

Finally, one respondent argues that he would approve of the head-teacher's use of Mauritian provided that it is a refined variety of the language (*ene kreol rafine*). The vulgar variety *(kreol grosie)* is thought inappropriate for use in a school setting and by the head of the institution. When asked what he means by "refined" and "vulgar" varieties of the language, Luximon states that the refined variety contains many French words (cf. Baker's (1972) "Refined Kreol", Chapter 6). To him, therefore, the head-teacher can use Mauritian in the assembly as long as the variety used approximates French – the refined language *par excellence*. A variety of Mauritian that diverges significantly from its lexifier language is not considered cultivated enough for addressing children in a school assembly. In the following chapter, we look more closely at the different varieties of Mauritian. What is especially interesting here is that the variety that is closest to French is seen as the most acceptable in the school setting. The different varieties are, therefore, ranked on a scale of refinement and acceptability in social settings.

The paragraphs above show a greater tendency to condemn or question the use of Mauritian in the school assembly rather than categorically accept it. In this corpus, the people who support the use of Mauritian by the head-teacher only do so for reasons of intelligibility, i.e, a practical reason. It is most likely that a message conveyed in Mauritian will be more intelligible to all age-groups, ethnicities and social classes than one transmitted in the languages of formal education. Some of these interviewees may, in fact, neither actively support nor condemn the head-teacher's use of Mauritian. To them, it does not matter which language the head-

teacher uses. In other words, their perception of the head-teacher is not influenced by his/her use of Mauritian in the school assembly – unlike the respondents who object to this situation.

As shown above, many interviewees would indeed look down on a head-teacher who uses Mauritian in a school assembly. Mauritian lacks prestige and is not thought fit for use in the domain of instruction. These views also help to determine the position of the head-teacher. Heads of academic institutions are seen as figures of authority who command respect and have to set the right example for pupils. For this reason, it is not appropriate for these respected characters to use a low variety like Mauritian when addressing children. Furthermore, some interviewees feel that head-teachers have to fulfil their obligation of educating children in English and French and should, therefore, not use Mauritian when addressing their pupils.

Some interviewees are less rigid in their views when they say that they would accept the use of Mauritian in a school assembly under specific circumstances. That is, they would not straightaway approve or disapprove of a head-teacher who uses Mauritian in a school assembly. Here again, they would accept or support the head-teacher's use of Mauritian only in cases where children cannot fully understand French and English. Clearly then, the use of Mauritian in this domain is accepted or supported if and only if pupils will not totally understand if the message is conveyed in another language. Interviewees differ as to the functions they ascribe to school assemblies. Their attitudes depend on their perceptions of head-teachers and morning assemblies.

Generally, if interviewees feel that the role of the head-teacher in the assembly is to educate children, then they reject the use of Mauritian in this domain.

In short then, this section confirms that the widespread usage and knowledge of Mauritian act in favour of its use in formal situations where people of different backgrounds are gathered. But its lack of prestige and official recognition is an obstacle to its use in these same situations.

5.6 Interactions with teachers

Respondents were also asked whether they would use Mauritian when talking to school- or college-teachers. Generally, students tend to have easier access and wider exposure to teachers than head-teachers. The student-teacher relationship can range from very formal to very informal. The degree of formality between teachers and their students will largely depend on the former's approach, which, in turn, determines how comfortable students feel in their company. Language choices made when talking to teachers will therefore vary according to the degree of formality associated with the teacher-student interaction. Mauritian will be absent in a formal teacher-student conversation, but present in a friendly one. Interviewees' responses are recorded in Table 5.5 and Figure 5.4 below[12].

It should be noted that in both formal and informal interactions, teachers are in a situation of authority. That is, they have power and a certain degree of control over the students. We can therefore expect this power differential to have a bearing on the politic behaviour – i.e., "that behaviour, linguistic and non-linguistic, which the

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participants construct as being appropriate to the ongoing social interaction" (Watts 2003: 144) – of any teacher-student interaction.

Interviewees		Do/would you use Mauritian with your teacher?			Total
		Yes	No	No response/ not applicable	
<13 yrs of age	M	0	1	1	2
	F	1	1	0	2
13-19	M	3	3	1	7
	F	2	4	0	6
20-39	M	12	3	1	16
	F	5	4	2	11
40-59	M	3	5	3	11
	F	5	2	3	10
>59	M	1	1	1	3
	F	1	4	6	11
Total		33	28	18	79

Table 5.5. Respondents by age-group, gender and use of Mauritian with teachers.
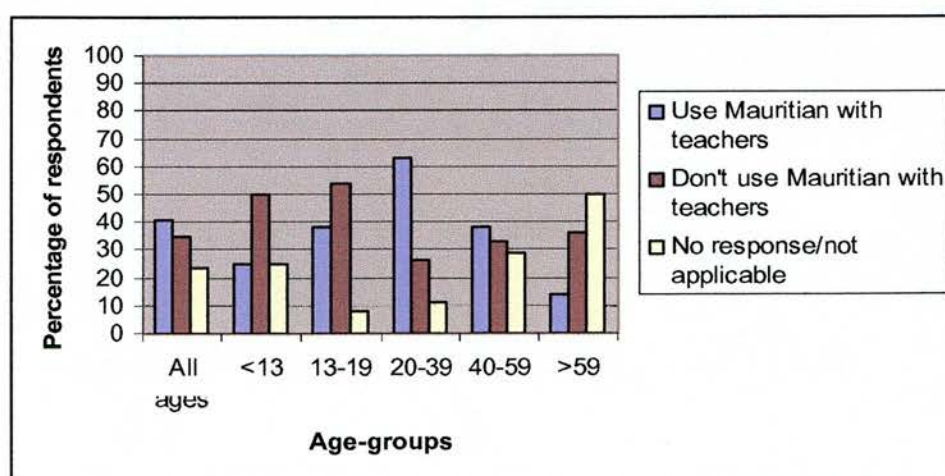
Figure 5.4. Percentage of respondents by age-group and use of Mauritian with teachers.

Figure 5.4 shows that 41% of the interviewees use Mauritian with their teachers. Sixteen of these interviewees add that they also use French and/or English alongside Mauritian when addressing their teachers. The greatest frequency of use of Mauritian is found among the 20-39 age-group (63%) followed by the 13-19 and 40-59 groups (38%), the <13 group (25%) and finally the >59 group (14%). Moreover, 35% of the Mauritians in this study do not use Mauritian with their teachers. The reasons put forward by some interviewees for their language choice in this domain give an interesting insight into local language attitudes and beliefs.

Many interviewees argue that whether or not they use Mauritian with their teachers would depend on the latter's approach. If the teachers are friendly, then Mauritian is used. But if interviewees feel that there is a distance between them and the teacher, then French or English is used. Dev (20-39, IMH) specifies that in the classroom, Mauritian is not used for addressing the teacher. But interestingly, outside the classroom (even if he is still within school premises), he would use Mauritian to address a teacher that he is used to. Here, a further condition is added to the use of Mauritian with a teacher: the location of the interaction. The classroom, therefore, functions as a domain of use in itself. It is a domain within the school domain. Rehaz (20-39, IMM), on his side, specifies that he uses French or a distinct variety of Mauritian when talking to a teacher: a "beautiful"/"refined" variety (*ene zoli kreol, ene kreol rafine*) (also, Luximon in section 5.5). A refined variety of Mauritian can be expected to approximate French (Rehaz) or the "French-influenced Kreol" spoken by Mauritians whose first language is French (Baker 1972: 39). The choice of French or refined Mauritian suggests that from Rehaz's perspective, the teacher is a respected figure who holds a position of prestige. Had the teacher been an equal, then

Rehaz would have used his "usual" or "normal" variety of Mauritian – the variety that he uses with his friends. Also, Fazil (20-39, IMM), Vimal (20-39, IMH) Joanne (20-39, CP) and Deepa (20-39, IMH) all state clearly that the norm is to use French with teachers. But with a friendly teacher or a teacher they are close to, they would use Mauritian.

Moreover, all the twenty-eight interviewees who would not address their teachers in Mauritian would use French or (in seven cases) English instead. Four interviewees in this group justify their language choice on the basis of respect/disrespect. They argue that they choose to speak French to their teachers and not Mauritian as a show of respect. Mauritian, according to them, does not convey respect. In other words, the use of Mauritian is not part of politic behaviour in the teacher-student interaction. Responses suggest that Mauritian is inappropriate here because it puts students and teachers on an equal footing and violates the power relations between teacher and student. Mauritian is appropriate in interactions with friends, i.e., is part of politic behaviour in this context, where participants operate on equal terms.

Clearly in the Mauritian context, the teacher is somebody who is respected and this respect has to be expressed through the student's language choice. Sabah (13-19, IMM) states that she has been taught that it is "disrespectful" to use Mauritian with teachers. Ashmita (13-19, IMH) reinforces Sabah's argument when she says that French is "more respectful" (*pli respektab)* than Mauritian and should, therefore, be used in interactions with teachers. Viraj (13-19, IMH), a college student, explains that he usually speaks English with all his teachers except for the French teacher

whom he obviously addresses in French. He is the only interviewee who claims to use English more often than French with teachers.

The above paragraphs suggest that French is the default language for addressing teachers. French is part of politic behaviour. Unlike Mauritian, it does not challenge the existing power differentials between teachers and students. Mauritian is a marked choice in interactions with teachers. In the statements above, Mauritian is marked with a double indexicality:

1. Mauritian as the language of informality, solidarity and intimacy

2. Mauritian as the language that is too informal and through which respect cannot be conveyed.

Those who feel that closeness can be expressed through Mauritian opt for this language when addressing teachers who come across as welcoming. The use of Mauritian in these cases, in no way, diminishes the respect that the student has for the teacher. It merely emphasises the informal nature of the relationship. Hence, this perspective highlights the role of Mauritian as a tool of inclusion rather than an expression of insolence. On the other hand, the second perspective underlines the negativity that can be attached to Mauritian. Some interviewees think that respect or admiration cannot be expressed through Mauritian. In other words, this language lacks finesse. Consequently, it is not thought appropriate for use with teachers. Instead, languages like French and English should be used with teachers even in informal interactions.

Respondents are negotiating their position with respect to their teachers in two domains: the intimacy domain and the power domain. Students and teachers have to establish a balance between intimacy and power. Language choice is crucial in establishing this balance. Students have to make the appropriate language choices so that they do not challenge the authoritative position of their teachers while sometimes simultaneously, maintaining a fairly informal relationship with them. This can be a difficult choice at times but it is important in the maintenance of social relationships. As Watts (2003: 156 - italics in original) points out, establishing

> an equilibrium is *always* carried out in ongoing social practice and it *always* entails the construction and reproduction of emergent networks. It involves the struggle to exercise power in socio-communicative verbal interaction.

Interviewees work towards establishing an "equilibrium" between intimacy and power relations. It is interesting to note that teachers' power is voluntarily acknowledged by my interviewees and implicitly reflected in their language use and attitudes in this social context.

Finally, the language choice and attitudes described above can partly explain the position of the teacher in Mauritius. On the basis of my interviewees' responses, the teacher is either seen as a good friend or as a respected figure of authority – these two traits are not mutually exclusive. The different roles of the teacher call upon different language choices. With the teacher-friend, Mauritian is used. With the respected character, Mauritian can be used depending on the language attitudes of the speaker. That is, if speakers feel that their appreciation for their teacher can be expressed through Mauritian, then they will resort to the language. If they do not

think that this is the case, then they will opt for French. Thus, it cannot be said that if students address a teacher in Mauritian, they are being disrespectful. On the contrary, their language choice could suggest a close relationship with the teacher. Therefore, their attitudes towards Mauritian cannot be considered in isolation but have to be assessed holistically before any conclusions can be drawn regarding their perceptions of teachers.

5.7 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has underlined the role of languages in the Mauritian education system. This issue is especially important because the linguistic situation in schools is likely to change in the coming years. Parallels can be drawn between the Mauritian education system and that of other post-colonial nations where native languages are backgrounded while colonial languages are foregrounded. The language-in-education issue is therefore not unique to Mauritius but applies to other creole-speaking and post-colonial communities as well. Countries like Seychelles and Namibia could serve as models to language planners in Mauritius. However, as pointed out by Mangubhai (2002: 249) with regards to language-in-education issues in the South Pacific, a linguistic issue

> cannot be resolved by simply importing a model that has worked in another country. It has to be evaluated in terms of the context in which it occurs and compared with the conditions found in the local context.

To learn more about these conditions and prevailing language ideologies, I have looked at laypeople's attitudes to the introduction of Mauritian in the national education system.

The above sections show that there is no consensus concerning the introduction of Mauritian in school and its use by the head-teacher. Indeed, views regarding the use of the language at school are divided. The widespread knowledge of Mauritian and its role as a marker of African identity act as a support to its introduction and use in school. However, its – literal – insularity and the lack of a standard are seen as hindrances to its promotion in the education system. Linguists, therefore, have to convince a significant section of the population of the usefulness of Mauritian as a subject and a medium of instruction. Mauritians have to be reassured that Mauritian will only function as a medium of instruction for the first years of formal education and will not negatively affect performance in other languages.

Compared to other ethnic groups, Afro-Mauritians in this corpus seem to be more supportive of the introduction of Mauritian at school. Further research is needed to assess whether the strength of this tendency can be generalised across all Afro-Mauritians.

Furthermore, even though Mauritian is not officially accepted in the education system, many interviewees would accept a head-teacher using this language in the school assembly. They would also opt for this language in interactions with teachers. In real life, therefore, Mauritian is not totally excluded from school premises but its uses are severely circumscribed.

Some of the claims explored above underline prevailing language ideologies in Mauritius. Some interviewees see Mauritian as an index of Mauritian identity and

hence, the language should therefore be promoted in all spheres, including the educational one. Others associate it with the Creole community and believe that the teaching of Mauritian at school would be especially beneficial to Creole children. The use of Mauritian as a mother-tongue or the teaching of the language as a subject is sometimes seen as a way of empowering the dominated groups, thus highlighting the socio-political functions of languages.

Finally, from the responses to the education questions, it is clear that many interviewees perceive Mauritian as a broken language or a derivative of French. It is a non-standard variety which is only limited to informal internal communication. The absence of a recognised standard form for Mauritian is often quoted as a reason against its introduction in the school system. As a matter of fact, many respondents argue that Mauritian cannot be introduced in the education system because it is not standardised. Some respondents argue that Mauritian should be taught in school so that a single standardised variety can be promoted. This shows that the same rhetoric of the "standard" can be used in favour of and against the teaching of the language at school. Different ideological positions therefore serve to reconstitute themselves. The approach adopted will depend on interviewees' perspectives and linguistic attitudes.

Chapter Six

True and Pure Mauritian

6.0   Introduction

Chapter 4 suggests that although Mauritian has been standardised, its standard form is not widely accepted by my interviewees. However, interviewees seem to have a tacit knowledge of what counts as "correct" or "good" Mauritian. In this chapter, I discuss respondents' understanding of "good" and "true" Mauritian. The first section briefly analyses the general notion of language purity. In the second section, I discuss respondents' description of the varieties of Mauritian and also, their attitudes to the existence of rural and urban varieties of Mauritian. The third section focuses on the research conducted in 2003 relating to perceptions of language purity (Chapter 3). In the fourth section, I discuss ideologies of language purity. The discussion in this chapter is summarised and concluded in the last section.

6.1   Background

Introductory textbooks of Linguistics stress the fact that Linguistics is a descriptive rather than prescriptive science (e.g., Gleason 1969, Crystal 1981, Weisler & Milekic 2000). Objectively, therefore, no one language variety is inherently better or purer (Milroy & Milroy 1991). However, as we have seen in chapters 4 and 5, users pass value judgements on different varieties or even languages. From the perspective of users, therefore, language varieties are compared to each other and ranked on a scale of correctness. Whether this comparison and ranking is done consciously or subconsciously is another topic of discussion. But it seems that the more "correct" or

"standard" a form is, the "better" it is generally. In other words, there are language norms to which one has to adhere in order to speak or write "correctly". In some cases, those norms conform to those used by social elites – as in the case of English. In others, the "correct" forms correspond to those used in religious texts – as in the case of Hebrew (Myhill 2004). Whatever the benchmark used, the point remains that for users generally, the notion of language is a normative and prescriptive one.

When a language has a recognised and well-established standard form, it is relatively easy to judge what count as "correct/ incorrect", "grammatical/ungrammatical", "standard/non-standard" forms. For instance, it is clear that the sentence *he buy a kar* is non-standard and would be described as grammatically "wrong" and containing a spelling "mistake". We can assess the correctness of this example on the basis of grammatical rules and spelling conventions for standard English. In doubtful cases, users can refer to dictionaries or grammar books in order to know what the "right" form or "correct" usage is. In other words, these reference materials help users and learners to acquire and use the standard, and hence correct, form of the language.

Mugglestone (1995) underlines the importance of dictionaries and other reference materials in the establishment and promotion of standard English and also, the development and perpetuation of prescriptive ideologies in Great Britain. In the fourteenth century, there was no dominant standard variety. Thus, there were no hierarchies between the regional varieties of English and they were all worthy of use in the written domain. However, in the fifteenth century, there was the promotion of the Chancery English "as a non-localized written norm". This led to a change in

"perceptions of dialect, status, and appropriate usage" (Mugglestone 1995: 9). In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, London English came to be perceived as a non-localized, superior variety of English and became the prestigious standard. Other varieties were regional and inferior to this non-localized standard. Standardisation led to the reinforcement of ideologies of prescriptivism. Such binary oppositions as "right/wrong", "beautiful/ugly", "correct/incorrect" were set between the standard and other varieties of English.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the development of "grammars, dictionaries, and manuals of linguistic usage" which strive "to set down intentionally invariant norms of usage by which 'correct' English is to be recognized, and 'incorrect' English to be proscribed" (Mugglestone 1995: 12-13). Prescriptive ideologies still persist today. The standard is generally associated with social prestige, economic success and is therefore, portrayed as the variety to be emulated. It is the correct form of the language. Regional varieties are rated against this standard and consequently, are seen as deviations from the idealised norm. Speakers of the standard tend to have more socio-economic prestige than speakers of regional varieties. Standardisation and prescriptivism can therefore serve to reinforce linguistic and social hierarchies.

Such prescriptive ideologies are widespread in other speech communities as well. French, for instance, has, what could be described as a strict "code of conduct". *L'Académie Française* tightly regulates what counts as "correct/incorrect" French and thus, ascertains that the language maintains its purity. The French-speaking

community, therefore, have an institution to regulate their language usage. French has a history of prescriptivism which dates back to the Middle Ages (Lodge 1993). French prescriptive ideologies are therefore firmly ingrained in the speech community. Like English and many other languages, the French language has some clear guidelines that show users how to speak and write correctly. By referring to dictionaries and other reference materials, users can learn the proper form of the language. In these languages, therefore, dictionaries and grammar books act as benchmarks against which the correctness or purity of different varieties can be assessed. They serve as tools for the promotion of prescriptive ideologies.

However, many languages have not been standardised or have no widely accepted standard. Thus, there are no dictionaries or grammar books that can act as yardsticks of correctness. Let us suppose, for instance, that language X has not been standardised. It is spoken by thousands of people in a remote region. The various age groups and social classes in that region speak slightly different forms of the language. Does this then mean that all the varieties of the language are "correct" or "equal"? Or do speakers feel that one variety is inherently superior or even better? Given that there are no dictionaries or set rules, how do they decide what is the "correct" form? In other words, do they have some tacit knowledge as to what counts as the standard or the pure variety? And, does the best/purest form coincide with a group that is most influential or prestigious? The case of languages that have not been standardised raises many interesting issues. To untangle some of these issues, we will look at the specific case of Mauritian.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, although there are dictionaries in Mauritian, there is no widely accepted standard form. In fact, the interviews show that some Mauritians believe that the language has no standard and no grammar. Thus, there are no benchmarks against which the correctness and purity of the various forms of the language can be assessed. Does this mean that for users all varieties are equal and have the same degree of propriety and purity? Interviews conducted for the 2002 survey show that many Mauritians have some notion of what counts as pure or true Mauritian. In chapters 4 and 5, we come across such responses as:

1.   *vre kreol* – true Creole (Jayen, 20-39, IMH)

2.   *pir kreol* – pure Creole (Hyder, 20-39, IMM)

3.   *ene zoli kreol* – a beautiful Creole (Rehaz, 20-39, IMM)

Although many interviewees do not think that there is a standard form of Mauritian, they believe that there are some forms that can be considered as "pure" or "true". That is, they have implicit knowledge of linguistic purity or authenticity even though there are no widely accepted reference materials.

Ideologies of purity of non-standard Mauritian have important social implications for the standardisation of the language. In Chapter 4, we saw that some individuals and groups are trying to promote a standard form of Mauritian. But the standards promoted by the Church and LPT are not widely used in the Mauritian community. It is therefore important to consider the attitudes of Mauritians towards the different varieties of Mauritian when devising a standard. It is possible that if the standard forms actually coincide with the "purest" or "most authentic" forms, they will be more easily accepted and used in the speech community.

In both the 2002 and 2003 fieldwork, I looked at ideologies of linguistic variation and purity. In the 2002 survey, respondents were asked whether "all Mauritians speak Mauritian in the same way". The purpose of this question was to detect whether there are different varieties of Mauritian and also, to identify the characteristics of these varieties. In order to find out more about the pure forms of Mauritian and the regions where they are spoken, I administered short questionnaires (Chapter 3, Appendix III, henceforth called map-questionnaires) to 100 respondents. The way in which these questionnaires were completed was described in Chapter 3. In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings for the map-questionnaires and also, the 2002 survey. The following sections show that authenticity and purity are explained by different speakers in very different ways. This internal heterogeneity is first brought out in the section below where I consider responses given by the Mauritians interviewed in 2002.

6.2   Varieties of Mauritian in the 2002 survey

In the 2002 survey, respondents were asked two questions related to varieties of Mauritian:

(a) Do all Mauritians speak Mauritian in the same way?

If no, how does the way they speak Mauritian differ? (Possibilities: accent, sentence structure, grammar, vocabulary, other)

(b) Are there distinct rural and urban varieties of Mauritian?

Questions (a) and (b) are straightforward yes-no questions. Interviewees were given the possibility to elaborate on their responses.

According to Baker (1972: 39), there are four main varieties of Mauritian:

1. *Ordinary Kreol* (OK): spoken "in all egalitarian situations by people from homes in which all the residents always speak Kreol amongst themselves"

2. *Bhojpuri-influenced Kreol* (BK): spoken by people whose first language is Bhojpuri.

3. *French-influenced Kreol* (FK): spoken by people whose first language is French.

4. *Refined Kreol* (RK): spoken by people whose first language is OK, but who regard FK "as socially more desirable and who attempt to imitate it".

Baker (1972) distinguishes the varieties of Mauritian on the basis of first language influence. He believes that the first language of a speaker will have a direct bearing on the variety of Mauritian used. That is, there will be some degrees of transfer between the first language and Mauritian. For instance, in the case of BK, the transfer tends to be at the grammatical level – e.g., speakers of BK tend to fail "to select the correct form (short or long) of a variable verb according to the usual OK rules" (Baker 1972: 39). In the case of FK, transfer occurs mostly at the phonological level. – e.g., speakers of FK introduce some phonemes /ə/ and /y/ not found in OK. (For a detailed description of OK, refer to Baker (1972)). The 2002 survey suggests that in everyday practices, Mauritians also distinguish varieties of Mauritian on the basis of first language interference. It would therefore be reasonable to say that Baker's observations still hold 30 years later – as will be shown below.

The purpose of question (b) was to find out whether my respondents believed that there was an urban and rural linguistic divide, as suggested in the literature (Hookoomsing 1987) and personal observation. In the paragraphs below, I discuss the responses to questions (a) and (b). I first assess whether the 2002 respondents

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think that there are different varieties of Mauritian and if so, how these varieties differ. Then, I discuss whether there is a consensus regarding the existence of rural and urban varieties. It should be noted that fifteen of the 2002 informants also completed the 2003 questionnaire.

6.2.1 Do all Mauritians speak Mauritian in the same way?

All 79 interviewees in the 2002 survey gave clear answers to this question. Table 6.1 below gives the breakdown of respondents by age-group, gender and their responses to question (a):

Interviewees		Do all Mauritians speak Mauritian in the same way?		Total
		Yes	No	
<13 yrs of age	M	1	1	2
	F	2	0	2
13-19	M	1	6	7
	F	0	6	6
20-39	M	4	12	16
	F	0	11	11
40-59	M	6	5	11
	F	5	5	10
>59	M	1	2	3
	F	3	8	11
Total		23	56	79

Table 6.1. Respondents by age group, gender and responses to question (a).

Table 6.1 shows that the majority of respondents believe that Mauritians do <u>not</u> speak Mauritian in the same way. Seventy-one percent of interviewees argue that there are different ways of speaking Mauritian while 29% believe that all

"Mauritians speak Mauritian in the same way". In some sense therefore, interviewees acknowledge the existence of different varieties of Mauritian – that is, different dialects of Mauritian.
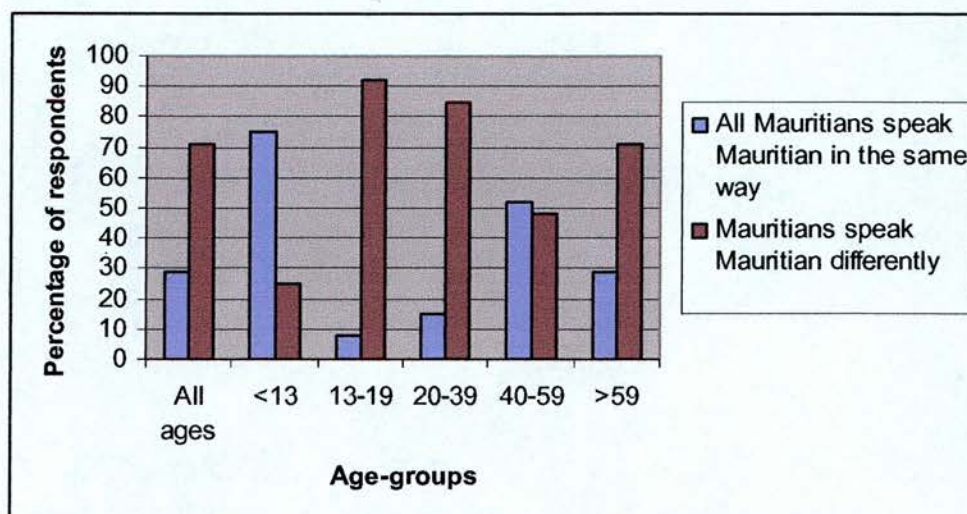
Figure 6.1. Percentage of respondents by age-group and responses to question (a).

This diversity is recognised most by those aged between 13-19. Indeed, 92% of interviewees aged between 13 and 19 years believe that Mauritians speak Mauritian differently – compared to 85% of the 20-39 group, 71% of those aged over 59, 48% of interviewees aged between 40 and 59 and 25% of the youngest age-group. These percentages are represented in Figure 6.1.

Overall, it seems that those aged between 13 and 39 are most critical of the spoken varieties of Mauritian. The group least sensitive to variation is the youngest age-group. Their views could be explained in terms of their lack of exposure to different forms of Mauritian. The next age-group, i.e., the teenagers, showed the greatest awareness of variations in the way Mauritian is spoken around the island. The following age-group also displays an important degree of sensitivity to language variation. In contrast, more than half of interviewees aged between 40 and 59 believe

that all Mauritians speak Mauritian "in the same way". They are less sensitive to variation than the oldest age-group where more than 71% of interviewees argue that the way Mauritians speak Mauritian differs.

Although most respondents believe that there are different ways of speaking Mauritian, many interviewees do not actually explain in what respects these "ways" are different. Only 30 of the 56 respondents explain how the varieties differ. The reasons given can be grouped into these three categories:

1.   influence of other languages

2.   accent

3.   vocabulary/ expressions

Some respondents quote two of the above to justify their response. Category (1) is the most quoted reason for explaining differences in varieties of Mauritian. Contact with other languages has modified Mauritian and created different varieties of the language. For instance, according to some respondents, many Mauritians – especially those living in villages – speak a Bhojpuri-influenced Mauritian (cf. Baker's BK), while other Mauritians speak a variety that shows no influence of other languages (cf. Baker's OK). The latter form is, in some sense then, purer than the former one.

Verena (20-39, IMH) is one such respondent who believes that there are different varieties of Mauritian spoken on the island:

Ex 6.1 Dan le nor, zot kreol pli ver bhojpuri, l'aksen-la diferen, ton kozer, prononciation pa pareil (...) Me pa ene mixture bhojpuri ek kreol sa, kreol mem sa.
In the North, their Mauritian tends more towards Bhojpuri, the accent is different, the tone, the pronunciation are not the same (...) But this is not a mixture of Bhojpuri and Mauritian, it's [a form of] Mauritian itself.

Verena identifies the northern part of the island as an area where there is a distinct variety of Mauritian spoken. The distinctiveness of this variety lies in its "Bhojpuri" character. She makes it clear that the inhabitants of that region do not speak a mixed language, but Mauritian itself. Verena feels that the differences can be felt at various levels: "accent", "pronunciation", "intonation". This Bhojpuri influence can be attributed to the fact that inhabitants are largely (thought to be) of Indian origin.

Acording to Eisenlohr (2004: 60), Bhojpuri has become "associated with a rural/urban divide in Mauritius between an Indian-dominated countryside and towns in which Creoles were initially more numerous". Some interviewees argue that inhabitants of the northern villages, unlike other villagers, have preserved their ancestral languages and actively use them. In turn, it is believed that these languages have a bearing on their variety of Mauritian. Similar views are expressed by Viraj (13-19, IMH), Simla (20-39, IMH), Babajee (20-39, IMH), Jayen (20-39, IMH) and Dawood (40-59, IMM) who argue that the Mauritian spoken in villages generally is influenced more by Indian languages – Bhojpuri specifically. The indexical relationship between Bhojpuri and villages has had an effect on the way rural Mauritian is perceived.

However, Indian languages are not the only ones to influence the way Mauritian is spoken. As Saroj (20-39, IMH) puts it,

Ex 6.2 *Ena dimun koz kreol ena plis linfluens franse, ena linfluens bhojpuri (…) se linfluens la lang pli proch ek twa.*
Some people speak Mauritian which is most influenced by French, some with Bhojpuri influence (...) it's the influence of the language that's closest to you.

Saroj believes that Mauritian can also be influenced by French (cf. Baker's FK). She sums up the situation when she says that it's the "language that's closest" to the speakers that has the greatest bearing on the way they talk Mauritian. The influence of French is acknowledged by a number of other interviewees. Hyder (20-39, IMM), Noor (20-39, IMM), Dawood (40-59, IMM), Amirah (13-19, IMM) and Simla (20-39, IMH), for instance, all argue that some people speak forms of Mauritian that are influenced by French. Amirah responds to question (a) in the following way:

Ex 6.3 Some speak Creole with a bit of French together. Some speak Creole Creole.

Amirah here describes two varieties of Mauritian: one variety which is influenced by French and one variety which is not. Interestingly, she chooses to call the latter variety "Creole Creole". In Chapter 4, other respondents like Rehaz, Jayen and Hyder also refer to a "Creole" variety of Mauritian. It seems that the *kreol kreol* acts as the norm against which the correctness of other varieties is assessed. As such, this *kreol kreol* correspondents to Baker's *Ordinary Kreol* (1972: 39).

For Amirah and some other interviewees, therefore, there seems to be a base or default form of Mauritian. It is the "Creole" form of the language. Unlike other Mauritian varieties, this Creole base-form seems devoid of influences from other linguistic systems and consequently, is pure. Varieties of Mauritian are assessed with respect to this abstract base-form, which could be described as the standard norms against which the "value" of other varieties is measured (section 6.1). Thus, in some ways, the "Creole Creole" is the real Mauritian whereas the other forms are distortions of this real form. The authenticity of Mauritian is brought out in a number of other responses. For instance, Noor (20-39, IMM) believes that some Mauritians

Ex 6.4 Koz pir kreol-la mem (…) ena koz ene tipe kreol, ene tipe franse
    Speak the pure Creole (…) some speak a little Creole, a little French.

Noor's response makes it clear that the pure form of Mauritian is not influenced by French. The notion of purity is therefore implicit in interviewees' responses. Two main languages are seen as threats to the purity of Mauritian: Bhojpuri and French. They infiltrate the true variety of Mauritian, or the "Creole" form of the language, thereby attacking the very creoleness of the language.

Moreover, the difference in accent and vocabulary (categories 2 and 3) quoted above can also, in some ways, be attributed to contact with other languages – in spite of the fact that many interviewees do not explicitly refer to influence from other linguistic systems. Accent is understood as the way of pronouncing words. For instance, Sushita (20-39, IMH) argues that the Franco-Mauritians have a "striking accent" which is different from that of the rest of the population. This difference in accent is due to the fact that their first language is French. Gallina (20-39, IMH) puts forward a similar argument when she says that the Chinese speak Mauritian with a "different pronunciation" (*ene prononsiation diferen*). This has to do with "their language" (*zot lang*), that is, Hakka and Mandarin. Thus, she believes that their first language has a bearing on the way they speak Mauritian. Differences in accent, therefore, can be traced back to one's first or most dominant languages. As Veronique (>59, FM) puts it, the differences in accent are due to the "language of origin" (*langue d'origine*). But she argues that "the base is the same" (*la base est la-même*).

While Veronique and the others focus on transfer effects at the phonological level, some informants highlight those at the lexical level. Fayyaz (20-39, IMM), for

instance, states that some varieties differ in terms of "the words used" (*mo ki servi*).

Chota (40-59, IMM) and Momin (>59, IMM) also think that there are differences at the level of choice of words. None of these interviewees elaborates on these lexical differences. It could be argued that these differences are once again due to the influence of other languages. Thus, a Bhojpuri-speaking villager might include Bhojpuri terms in his variety of Mauritian; or as Aslam (20-39, IMM) claims some people use more French words in their variety of Mauritian. As for Sarah (20-39, CP), she believes that differences exist at the level of vocabulary and also, at that of specific expressions. Her views are endorsed by Eric (20-39, FM), Raymond (40-59, FM), Deepa (20-39, CP) and Tantine (>59, CP).

Raymond and Eric clearly link the lexical differences to purity of language and influence of other languages. For instance, Raymond states that

> Ex 6.5 *Si vous prenez le Créole de la côte, ses expressions, son accent est différent que le Mauricien qui vient d'une ville. Le créole parlé sur la côte est beaucoup plus imagé, c'est un langage beaucoup plus imagé que celui de la ville. La ville c'est plutôt une traduction du français au créole, de l'anglais au créole, de l'indien au créole.*
> If you take the Creole person of the coast[13], his expressions, his accent is different from that of a Mauritian who comes from town. The Creole spoken on the coast contains more images, it uses many more imageries than the language of town. In town, it's rather a translation from French to Creole, English to Creole or Indian [languages] to Creole.

Raymond's response is interesting in a number of ways. First, he draws a distinction between two forms of Mauritian: coastal and urban. The coastal Mauritian is, according to him, characterised by the use of images or rich metaphors. In contrast, urban Mauritian does not make use of (as many) images. Thus, it could be argued that in some ways, urban Mauritian is less expressive than coastal Mauritian. The coastal accent also differs from the urban one. Furthermore, the "inferiority" of urban

Mauritian with respect to coastal Mauritian is seen in the fact that the former variety is only a translated version of other languages, including French, English and Indian varieties. Eric also argues that the Mauritian spoken in town converges more with French; a Mauritian *à la française*. In some sense then, urban Mauritian is characterised as not being a proper language as such with its own images and expressions, but rather a variety that borrows from other languages. Also, Raymond associates coastal Mauritian, i.e., the expressive variety of Mauritian, with a specific group: the Creoles. His statement suggests that Creoles speak a form of Mauritian that is different from that of the rest of the population. Their variety of Mauritian is not a translated version of other languages, but a language in its own right with its own expressions and accent. We come back to Raymond's statement in the following chapter where we discuss ownership of Mauritian.

Overall, therefore, interviewees are aware of variations in the way Mauritian is spoken by different groups around the island. Differences are generally attributed to language contact – especially contact with Bhojpuri and French. Interestingly, of the 23 respondents who spontaneously state that all Mauritians "speak Mauritian in the same way", 16 go on to argue that there are differences between rural and urban varieties. Given this situation, it could be argued that in fact 72 interviewees, i.e., 91% of the corpus, believe that there are variations in the way Mauritian is spoken. The views of these 16 interviewees will be discussed in the next section where we analyse responses to the question relating to urban and rural varieties of Mauritian (question (b), section 6.2).

Finally, only 7 of the 79 respondents believe that there is a uniform way of speaking Mauritian. Dev (20-39, IMH), for instance, argues that "Mauritius is too small" for there to be different varieties of Mauritian. In his view therefore, the size of the nation ensures that a homogeneous form of Mauritian is spoken throughout the island. It appears that for him, diversity is an outcome of size. That is, the bigger a country is, the more dialectal variations will there be. As for Vimal (20-39, IMH), he expresses a different ideology. He states that there used to be different ways of speaking Mauritian, but nowadays all Mauritians speak Mauritian in the same way. The gradual disappearance of ancestral languages and wider exposure to Mauritian has led or is leading to the spread of a homogeneous form of the language. Ram (40-59, IMH) illustrates this point clearly:

Ex 6.6 Presk tu Morisien koz kreol pareil aktuelmen; konpare avan ki nu ban paren hindu, musulman, de la race asiatik i konpri les chinois; lontan ti ena en diferens kan zot ti ape koz kreol.
Nearly all Mauritians speak Creole in the same way nowadays; compared to before when our Hindu, Muslim parents, of the Asian race including the Chinese; previously there were differences when they would speak Creole.

The variations were due to influence of native languages like Bhojpuri, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil and Hakka. But since these languages are rarely used nowadays, their influence on Mauritian is non-existent or minimal. Today therefore, Mauritians use a variety devoid of outside influences. When asked whether there are distinct rural and urban varieties of Mauritian, Ram states that "there is a difference" (*ena en diferens*). So, after all, there are variations in the way Mauritian is spoken around the island. We analyse Ram's and other similar responses in the section below.

6.2.2 Rural and urban varieties of Mauritian

It has been suggested that the way Mauritian is spoken in the two main urban areas differs from the way in which it is spoken in villages (Hookoomsing 1987). This is confirmed by the responses in the 2002 survey. Indeed, 69 out of the 79 interviewees, i.e., 87% of interviewees, believe that the variety of Mauritian used in towns is different from the one(s) spoken in villages.

On the basis of the 2002 responses, it can be said that respondents put forward differing language ideologies and attach different indexical values to rural and urban varieties of Mauritian. Some respondents argue that rural Mauritian is heavily influenced by Indian languages (especially Bhojpuri). Hence, rural Mauritian is not as good as urban Mauritian. Krystel (13-19, CP), Robert (40-59, CP) and Babajee (20-39, IMH) claim that villagers do not speak Mauritian "properly" because their language is adversely affected by their Indian varieties (e.g., *zot koz impe barok* – they speak in an improper/broken way; *zot pa koz kreol bien* – they do not speak Creole well). For these three respondents and others like Jayen (20-39, IMH), Simla (20-39, IMH) and Dawood (40-59, IMM), rural Mauritian is characterised by contact with, and contamination by, Indian languages. The linguistic situation in villages, therefore, has a direct impact on the variety of Mauritian spoken there. Rural Mauritian with its important Bhojpuri influence is an index of Indianness.

In contrast, the influence of Indian languages on urban Mauritian is minimal because these languages are not often used in towns. Urban Mauritian, therefore, is devoid of the influence of Bhojpuri which is "evaluated as a rustic, unsophisticated medium of humble indentured laborers in the sugarcane fields" (Eisenlohr 2004: 60). In some

sense then, urban Mauritian is "better" than rural Mauritian or as Tonton (>59, CP) puts it, urban Mauritian is "more developed, more direct, clearer" (*plus développé, plus direct, plus clair*). Urban Mauritian, therefore, becomes an index of sophistication and non-Indianness while rural Mauritian is an index of Indianness and simplicity/primitiveness. The urban/rural divide therefore marks ethnic and socio-economic differences as well. It could even be argued that the socio-economic development of towns is reflected in the development of Mauritian and its movement away from the influence of ancestral languages.

Furthermore, definitions of linguistic purity and authenticity differ significantly among interviewees. For instance, some respondents argue that this very lack of sophistication of rural Mauritian makes it more authentic than the urban variety. Mira (13-19, IMH) sums up the situation in this way:

> Ex 6.7 *People who live in villages, they speak Creole <u>much better</u> than people who live in towns; because in towns, they are much <u>more developed</u>. They go to their workplace, they go out in a <u>more refined environment</u>. They have to speak French, they have to speak English, they have to interact with people from abroad (…) So, the Creole is not so much present in towns. Whereas in villages, there's much more interaction between people, there's much more conversation (…) The Creole develops among them. They speak Creole much better. Whereas in towns, in our Creole, we put English, we put French in it. But in villages, they speak Creole <u>fluently</u>.* (my emphasis)

Mira sees Mauritian as a resource used for building community links. The indexical values that she attaches to urban and rural places are similar to those put forward by other interviewees. For instance, like Tonton, she indexes urban places with development and refinement and rural regions with simplicity. But for Mira, correctness is defined in terms of simplicity, rather than sophistication. It is also defined in terms of absence of influence from other linguistic systems, especially English and French.

It should be pointed out that Mira does not mention the important presence of Indian languages in villages - unlike Simla and Babajee, for instance – and hence, their possible impact on rural Mauritian. The socio-economic situation in villages is such that people do not have the opportunity to use European/foreign languages. These languages are linked with development and a "refined environment". In her interview, Mira depicts a cosy picture of village life as opposed to city-life which is seen as hectic and very business-driven. By extension, Mauritian is associated with simplicity and warmth. Because villagers do not interact with outsiders, their Mauritian is not contaminated by foreign varieties. It only "develops" by itself – without outside influences – and hence, is better than urban Mauritian. Also, villagers speak Mauritian more fluently than inhabitants of towns because they do not add English and French words in their language. This rural variety could therefore be described as pure Mauritian or true Mauritian.

Similar views are expressed by Kevin (13-19, CP), Shah (20-39, IMM) and Eric (20-39, FM). They specifically refer to rural Mauritian as *vre kreol* (true Creole). Kevin opposes this rural *vre kreol* to the urban *kreol melanze* (mixed Creole). This urban variety is mixed with French and as such, is not an authentic variety. Transfer, therefore, is perceived negatively. Shah believes that urban Mauritian is not only influenced by French, but also English. For him, "speaking Mauritian well" (*koz kreol bien*) means "not incorporating French and English words" in the language (*pa met mo franse ek angle ladan*). Eric also claims that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken in villages generally, and specifically in the small village of Baie du Cap:

Ex 6.8 Un village comme Baie du Cap, un village très vieux, très retiré. Ce sont des personnes qui ressemblent un peu aux Rodriguais; vieille culture, vieilles traditions, vieux langage (...) Vous verrez là-bas un créole beaucoup plus sauvage. En ville, ce sera un créole beaucoup plus travaillé à la française.
A village like Baie du Cap, a very old, very secluded village. These are people who resemble the inhabitants of Rodrigues[14]; old culture, old traditions, old language (...) You will see there a creole that is much more primitive. In town, it's a creole that is "moulded" *à la française.*

Eric adds new elements to the definition of *vre kreol*. He uses two measures: age and physical location. *Vre kreol* is an old language that has been preserved at a "primitive" state and hence, lacks the sophistication of city-life. Eric, therefore, defines authenticity in terms of primitiveness and absence of French influence. The physical seclusion of Baie du Cap has preserved the Mauritian spoken there from coming into contact with French. To a certain extent, his views echo those of Mira who defined correctness in terms of simplicity. Urban places are characterised by socio-economic development and also, use of French. In the Mauritian context, therefore, French is clearly a marker of sophistication and socio-economic progress (Chapter 2).

Like Mira, these three interviewees ignore the fact that in many villages, Bhojpuri is still spoken. Rural varieties could therefore also show the influence of other linguistic systems and be *melanze* (mixed). That is, they "ignore sociolinguistic facts that are at odds with the ideological vision being promoted conceptually" (Eisenlohr 2004: 63). It seems that for these interviewees true Mauritian is mainly characterised by no or minimal influence from French (and possibly, English). The impact of Indian languages does not affect the purity of Mauritian – at least, not in the same way as French does. In these extracts, Mauritian, which is seen mostly as a rural language, is set in opposition to the colonial languages, French and English, the city

languages. That Mauritian is associated with the warmth of *la kanpagn* (villages, rural settings) supports its position as a language of friendship and solidarity (chapters 2, 4 and 5).

Generally, therefore, interviewees tackle the question of linguistic variation and purity from different ideological positions. What is clear in all these extracts is that people living in villages speak differently from people living in town. While rural Mauritian tends to be an index of primitiveness, urban Mauritian is an index of sophistication. In some cases, the urban variety is seen as the purer form; while in others, rural Mauritian is seen as the true form. What is interesting is that in both cases, purity seems to be defined in terms of degree of interference from other linguistic systems. Generally, the true or pure form of Mauritian is the one that shows the least influence from other languages. While some interviewees focus on the impact of French, others highlight that of Bhojpuri. That is, interviewees differ in what they consider to be significant linguistic influences. These different ideological perspectives give rise to different responses as to where the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken. Having analysed interviewees' perceptions of linguistic variation, we now move on to discuss local notions of linguistic purity on the basis of the map-questionnaires.

6.3   The map-questionnaires

The questionnaire used for this part of the study consists of a map of Mauritius copied from a primary-school atlas. The map shows the nine administrative districts of the island (Appendix III). The questionnaire can be divided into two parts: personal details and language questions. In the first part, respondents are asked their

name, age, gender, place of residence and ethnic group/religion. They then move on to the language questions where they are first asked whether they think that all Mauritians speak Mauritian in the same way (similar to question (a) in the 2002 survey – section 6.2.1). If their response is negative, they then have to circle the district(s) on the map where they think that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken.

It should be noted that in the language section, respondents are first asked about the existence of different varieties. That is, they are not simply asked "where are the purest forms of Mauritian spoken?" Such a question could have directed them towards thinking that purest forms of the language necessarily exist. The first question in the language section is meant to act as an opener. Although the phrasing of the actual question could also suggest that varieties can be ranked on a scale of purity, it has the advantage of giving a certain degree of flexibility to respondents compared to the direct question just described. In fact, some respondents argue that there are no pure forms of the language even though different varieties are spoken. These reactions and the other responses are analysed in the sections below.

6.3.1   The respondents

One hundred Mauritians participated in this part of the study.   Fifteen of these respondents had been interviewed as part of the survey carried out in 2002. Table 3.3 and figures 3.3 and 3.4 in Chapter 3 give the breakdown of interviewees by ethnic group, age group, gender and place of residence. It should be noted that this part of the study, unlike the 2002 survey, includes Mauritians of Chinese origin. They are included here simply because they were given the questionnaires to complete by friends and for no other specific social or scientific reason (Chapter 3). All these

Sino-Mauritian interviewees are of Christian faith and therefore, could have been included among the Coloured/Mixed Population, which is a heterogeneous group of Christians (Chapter 2). Also, there are no Franco-Mauritians in this sample.

6.3.2 Findings

6.3.2.1 Would you say that all Mauritians speak Mauritian in the same way?

Responses to this question are straightforward "yes" or "no". A staggering 93% of Mauritians in this corpus think that there are several ways of speaking Mauritian. This group comprises respondents of both sexes and places of residence and also, of all ethnicities/religions and age ranges. This figure is in close concordance to the one obtained in the 2002 fieldwork. In the 2002 survey, 91% of interviewees claim that there are different ways of speaking Mauritian. We come back to the 2002 survey responses in the following sections where we incorporate them in the discussion of the map-questionnaire findings. At this stage, it suffices to say that the general findings in the two corpora both point to the fact that Mauritians generally believe that there are different varieties of Mauritian. The 2002 and 2003 findings reinforce each other, as will be further shown below.

Only 7 respondents think that all Mauritians speak Mauritian in the same way. All these respondents live in towns. This group consists of:

1. two Hindu women, one aged between 20 and 39 and one between 40 and 59 years;

2. two Muslim men, both aged between 40 and 59 years;

3. one Afro-Mauritian woman aged between 20 and 39; and

4.   two male members of the Coloured Population, one is a teenager and one is in
       the 40-59 age range.

As can be seen, these seven respondents form a very small and heterogeneous group. In the following sections, we focus on the 93 respondents who argue that all Mauritians do not speak Mauritian in the same way.

6.3.2.2 Where are the purest forms of Mauritian spoken?

Given the small scale of this study, the island is only divided into its nine administrative districts. That is, no further or finer subdivisions are made. Of the 9 districts, two can be counted as urban – Port-Louis and Plaines Wilhems – and the rest as rural. Although there are some rural regions within the two urban districts, they tend to be associated with city-life and urbanisation. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Port-Louis is the capital city while all the 6 Mauritian towns are found in Plaines Wilhems. Map 2.3 in Chapter 2 shows the exact location of each district along with some of the most populated towns/villages in the districts.

It should be noted that some respondents name some explicit places within a district where they think that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken. Some of the responses cover specific regions in more than one district. For example, Simla (20-39, IMH) believes that the purest forms of Mauritian are mostly found along the coastal regions. As such, therefore, her response does not cover one specific district but could include all the districts that are along the coast. We analyse her response and similar ones later in this chapter.

Furthermore, although Emilie (13-19, CP) and Chota (40-59, IMM) believe that there are different varieties of Mauritian, they find it difficult to say where the purest forms are spoken. Also, Krit (20-39, IMH) and Sharon (20-39, CP) explicitly note on their questionnaires that "there is no purest form of Creole". With the exception of these four cases, all respondents show on the questionnaire where they think that the purest forms of Mauritian can be found. In fact, some respondents think that the purest forms are spoken in more than one district. All the districts mentioned are recorded in Tables 6.3 and 6.4.

It should be noted that the number of respondents in Table 6.3 adds up to 89 only. This figure excludes:

1. the seven respondents who think that all Mauritians speak Mauritian in the same way;

2. the Muslim and the Coloured Person who could not say in which district the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken; and

3. the Hindu and the Coloured Person who explicitly state that "there is no purest form of Creole".

Frequency of districts in responses (in isolation or in combination)	Total
Black River	61
Port Louis	27
Plaines Wilhems	22
Grand Port	21
Savanne	17
Flacq	14
Riviere du Rempart	13
Pamplemousses	11
Moka	2

Table 6.2. Number of times each district is mentioned.

Districts	Ethnicity/Religion					Total
	IMH	IMM	AF	SM	CP	
BR only	17	3	0	3	0	23
PL only	0	1	1	2	1	5
PW only	0	1	2	0	1	4
GP only	0	0	0	0	1	1
Fl only	0	0	0	0	2	2
Mk only	1	0	0	0	0	1
BR & PL	2	3	0	0	0	5
BR & GP	2	0	0	1	1	4
BR & Sn	1	1	0	2	0	4
BR & Fl	1	0	0	0	0	1
BR & Pp	0	0	0	0	1	1
BR & RR	1	0	0	0	0	1
BR, PL & GP	1	0	0	0	1	2
BR, PL & PW	1	1	1	1	2	6
BR, GP & PW	1	1	0	0	0	2
BR, GP & Sn	1	0	1	0	0	2
BR, RR & Fl	0	2	0	0	0	2
BR, PW & Pp	0	0	0	0	1	1
BR, PW, Fl & PL/GP	0	0	0	0	2	2
BR with 4 or more other districts	2	1	0	2	0	5
PL & PW	3	2	0	0	1	6
GP & Sn	0	1	0	1	0	2
RR & Pp	0	2	0	0	0	2
PL, PW & Mk	0	1	0	0	0	1
RR, Sn & Fl/Pp	1	1	0	0	0	2
PL, GP, RR & Sn	0	1	0	0	0	1
RR, GP, Pp, Fl & Sn	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	36	22	5	12	14	89

Table 6.3. Respondents by ethnicity and responses to question 2.

Key: BR – Black River; Fl- Flacq; GP – Grand Port; Mk – Moka; PL – Port-Louis; Pp – Pamplemousses; PW- Plaines Wilhems; RR- Rivière du Rempart; Sn- Savanne.

All the nine districts are included in Tables 6.3 and 6.4. However, there are important differences between the number of times each district is mentioned. The two tables above show that Black River is unquestionably the most common region associated with the purest forms of Mauritian. Indeed, 61 out of the 89 respondents in Table 6.3 claim that Black River is (one of) the district(s) where the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken. That is, the majority of informants – 69% – think that the purest forms of Mauritian can be found in this western district. The second and third districts most frequently associated with purity of Mauritian are Port-Louis and Plaines Wilhems – the city-district and the towns-district. They are mentioned by 30% and 25% of the 89 respondents, respectively. The two southern districts, Grand Port and Savanne, come in fourth and fifth positions, respectively. They are followed by the eastern district Flacq and the northern ones, Rivière du Rempart and Pamplemousses. In this corpus, the central district Moka is least associated with the purity of Mauritian. Indeed, only 2% of informants circle Moka as the region where the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken.

On the basis of these percentages, the districts could be grouped into 4 broad regions (Map 6.1):

Region 1 (R1 – 61 mentions): Black River

Region 2 (R2 – 17 to 27 mentions): Port-Louis, Plaines Wilhems, Grand Port, Savanne

Region 3 (R3 – 11 to 14 responses): Flacq, Pamplemousses, Riviere du Rempart

Region 4 (R4 – 2 responses): Moka
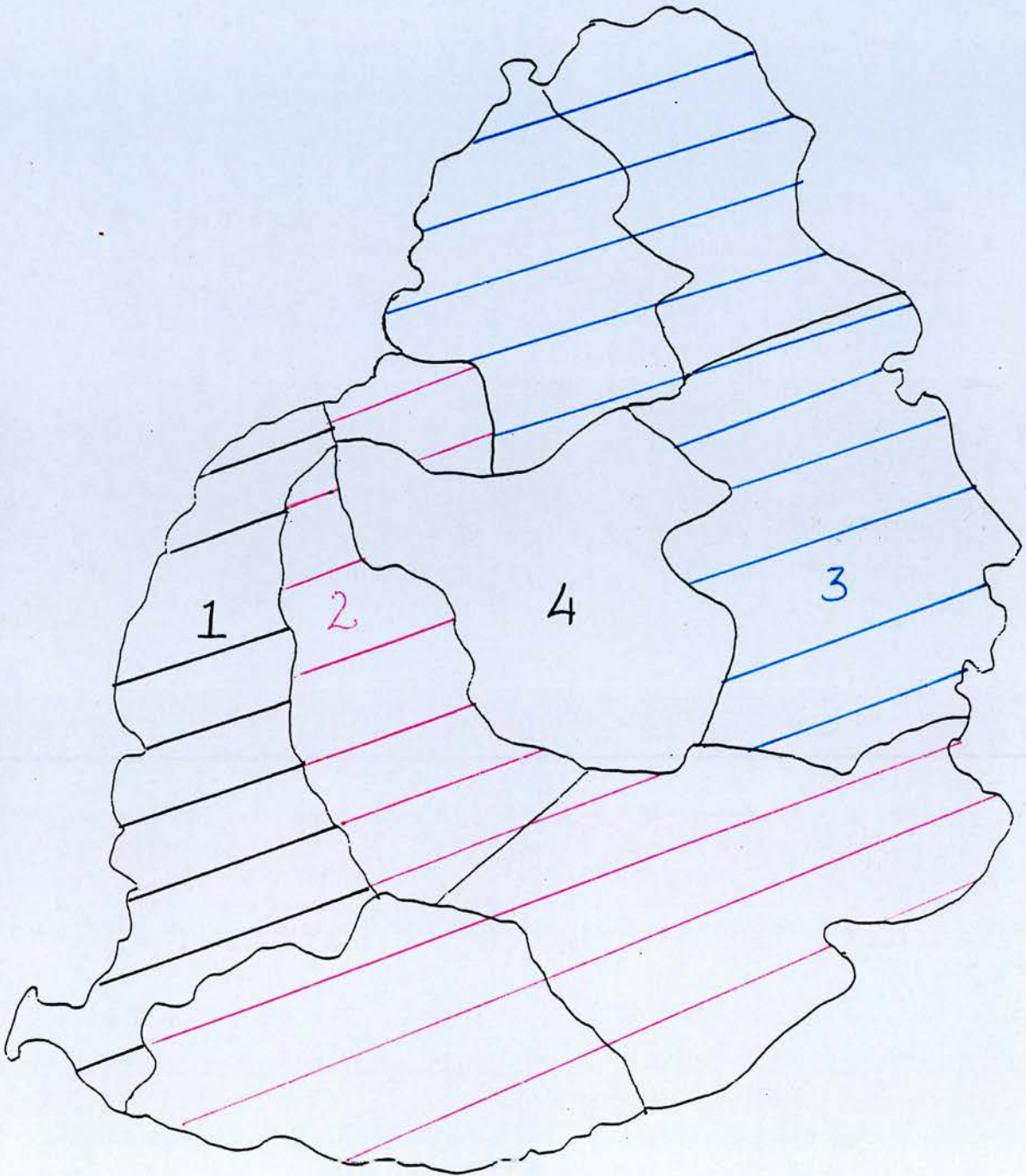
Map 6.1. Purity of Mauritian and the four regions.

The two most marked regions are, therefore, Black River and Moka. Clearly in this corpus, Black River is the region associated with the purest forms of Mauritian, while Moka is the region least linked with these forms. However, this does not necessarily mean that Moka is the region where the least pure forms of Mauritian are spoken. It is possible that inhabitants of Moka speak a form of Mauritian that is "neutral" – that is, it is seen as being neither very pure nor very impure. It would be interesting to find out how the inhabitants of Moka speak and in what ways their variety of Mauritian differs from that of the rest of the population. However, in this dissertation, I will mostly focus on the markedness of Black River as the region associated with purity of Mauritian, rather than the Moka responses. How could we explain the important number of Black River responses? Could informants' ethnicity have had a role to play in influencing their responses? That is, did one ethnic group show a greater tendency towards circling Black River? In the following section, we look at the relationship between responses given and ethnicity in an attempt to explain the important preference for Black River.

6.3.3   Responses and ethnicity

Table 6.3 above shows that Black River is mentioned either in isolation or in combination with other districts by all ethnic groups. Table 6.4 further illustrates this point.

A chi-square test performed on the data in Table 6.4 reveals that ethnicity is not a significant factor in influencing responses to question (b). ($\chi^2 = 8.62$ (to 3 significant figures); degrees of freedom = 4, $p \leq 0.10$, for significance at the .05 level, χ^2 should be greater than or equal to 9.49. Therefore, the distribution is not significant).

Ethnicity/Religion	Black River mentioned	Black River not mentioned	% of the group mentioning Black River
Indo-Mauritian Hindu	30	6	83
Indo-Mauritian Muslim	12	10	55
Afro-Mauritian	2	3	40
Chinese	9	3	75
Coloured Population	8	6	57
Total	61	28	N/A

Table 6.4. Ethnic groups and frequency of responses with "Black River".
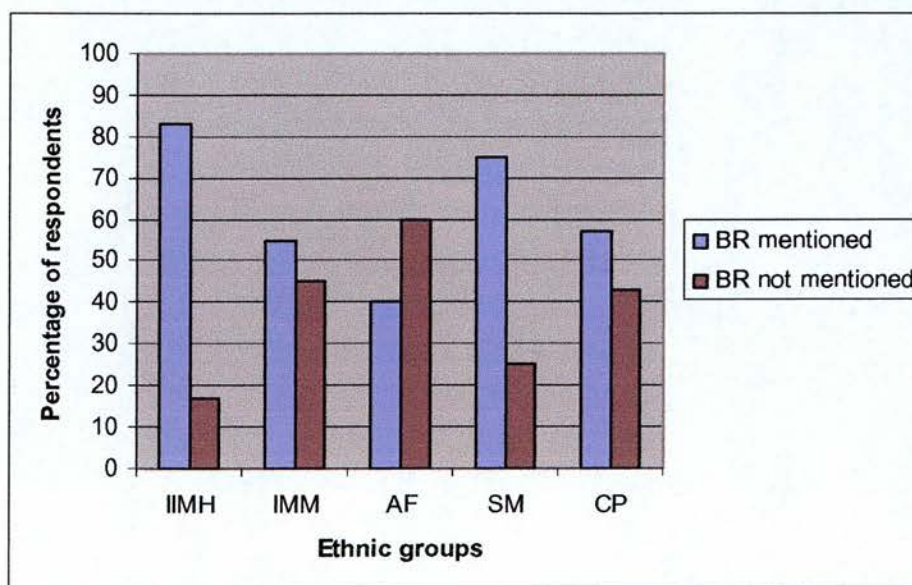
Figure 6.2. Percentage of respondents by ethnicity and Black River responses.

Table 6.4 and Figure 6.2 show that the clear majority of Hindus and Chinese in this corpus think that the inhabitants of Black River speak the purest forms of Mauritian. In the Coloured Population and Muslim groups also, a preference for Black River can be observed. As for the Afro-Mauritians in this part of the study, 40% believe that purest forms of Mauritian are spoken in Black River. The remaining 60% think that the inhabitants of Port-Louis or Plaines Wilhems, i.e., Region 2, use the purest forms of Mauritian. Also, if the Afro- and Sino-Mauritians and members of the Coloured Population are grouped into the official category *General Population,* Black River is mentioned a total of 19 times (i.e., 61% of this regrouping). On the

whole, it can be seen that Black River is mentioned by all ethnic groups even though some groups show a marked tendency towards stating it as the region where the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken.

A similar trend applies to most of the other districts. Indeed, Port-Louis, Plaines Wilhems and Grand Port are mentioned by respondents of all ethnic groups. However, no Afro-Mauritian states Regions 3 and 4, i.e., Flacq, Rivière du Rempart, Pamplemousses and Moka, as areas where the purest forms of Mauritian are used. The fact that no Afro-Mauritian circled these two regions could be linked to their small numbers in this part of the study rather than their ethnicity. In other words, it is possible that if there were more than five Afro-Mauritians in this corpus, then these districts would have been mentioned too. No Sino-Mauritian and no member of the Coloured Population thinks that the purest forms of Mauritian are used in the district of Moka. As mentioned above, this region does not seem to be generally associated with purity of Mauritian. Also, no member of the Coloured Population circled the districts Rivière du Rempart and Savanne on their questionnaire. Generally, therefore, responses were quite fairly divided among the various ethnic and religious groups. That is, most ethnic groups show a tendency towards circling Black River and not circling Moka.

The link between Black River and Mauritian is clearly brought out in this chapter and needs to be explored further. Why is it that the majority of respondents, irrespective of their ethnic groups, believe that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken in that one region? I here adopt an approach taken by a number of perceptual dialectologists and sociolinguists generally. I argue that in linking the language with

a region, respondents are in fact linking the language with the inhabitants of that region (Francis 1993, Preston 1999). Therefore, what is it about the inhabitants of Black River that make their variety of Mauritian pure and different from that of the rest of the population? Who are the inhabitants of Black River?

By referring to some of the 2000 Population Census tables on Black River, we analyse the ethnicity and languages of the people of Black River. We discuss informants' comments with respect to this analysis in the section below.

6.3.4   What is special about Black River and what is its link to Mauritian?

Black River is situated in the west of the island. Many villages of the district are along the coast. With a population of approximately 64 000 (Central Statistical Office 2002; according to the 2000 Population Census, there were exactly 60 587 people living in the district in July 2000), Black River is the least populated of all the nine districts of the island. The inhabitants of Black River make up only 5.3% of the total resident population of Mauritius. The three main religious factions Christianity, Hinduism and Islam, are present in Black River: 55% of the population are Christians, 39% Hindus and 2% Muslims.

No official information as to the ethnicity of the Christian or General Population group could be obtained. However, it is generally accepted in Mauritius that most of the Christian inhabitants of Black River (BR) are Creoles. According to Moutou (1996) many of the liberated slaves, i.e., the apprentices, settled in BR upon emancipation. As mentioned in Chapter 2, one of the stereotypical occupations of the Creole population is fishing. The fact that there are many fishing villages in Black

River emphasises the link between the fishing occupation, the district and the Creole ethnic group. Furthermore, the mountain *Le Morne* in Black River has links with the ancestors of the Afro-Mauritians as run-away slaves used to hide there. This historical fact further reinforces the association between the region and the Creole population.

Black River is usually considered as one of the economically and socially most disadvantaged regions of the country. Illiteracy rates are high: 20% of the inhabitants of Black River cannot read or write a simple sentence in any language (for definition of literacy as used in the 2000 Population Census, see Chapter 5). Of the active population, 8% are currently unemployed. According to the 2000 Population Census, 5% of the population are in such high positions as legislators, senior officials, managers and professionals. The major occupational group is the one described as "elementary occupations" with 29% of the inhabitants being elementary and/or unskilled workers. Thus, almost a third of the population are clearly part of the lowest social class (see Chapter 2 for a definition of social classes in Mauritius). Black River could therefore be described as a socially, economically and educationally deprived region. The socio-economic situation of Black River mirrors that of the Creoles in that they are usually described as a socio-economically deprived community (Chapter 2).

As far as its linguistic situation is concerned, Mauritian is the language most often spoken in homes in Black River. Seventy-five percent of the inhabitants of Black River speak Mauritian at home while 6% and 2% use French and Bhojpuri, respectively. Other languages such as English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Urdu

and Chinese are claimed to be usually spoken at home by a very small minority –
0.4% for English and 0.3% or less for the other languages. The relative importance of
French as a language usually spoken at home can be explained by the presence of
Franco-Mauritians in the district.

The important presence of Mauritian in Black River households is not surprising or
exceptional because in all districts Mauritian is the language spoken in most homes.
In fact, in some districts, the percentage is even higher. In the table below, the
percentage of people who usually speak Mauritian at home is given per district.

District	% of residents who usually speak Mauritian at home	Language most often spoken after Mauritian (and % of residents using that language)
Port-Louis	85	French (1%)
Savanne	79	Bhojpuri (10%)
Black River	75	French (6%)
Plaines Wilhems	74	French (8%)
Grand Port	73	Bhojpuri (16%)
Moka	70	Bhojpuri (13%)
Pamplemousses	56	Bhojpuri (24%)
Flacq	56	Bhojpuri (32%)
Riviere du Rempart	50	Bhojpuri (27%)

Table 6.5. The two languages most often spoken in the nine districts.[15]

Table 6.5 shows that Black River is not the district where Mauritian is spoken in the
greatest number of homes. It comes only third after Port-Louis and Savanne. But
Black River differs from the other rural districts in that French is the language most
often spoken after Mauritian. In all the other rural districts, Bhojpuri has an
important place in the household and is used by at least 10% of the local population.
Therefore, linguistically, Black River diverges from the other rural regions and

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instead looks more like the two urban districts, Port Louis and Plaines Wilhems –
where French is the language used by the greatest number of residents after
Mauritian. Also, the relative unimportance of Bhojpuri could suggest that Indo-
Mauritians do not make up as important a part of the local population as in other
rural districts. This is confirmed by the figures for religious groups. Indeed, by
adding the figures for Hindus and Muslims in Black River, one can get an indication
of the number of Indo-Mauritians in the district. Thus, approximately 41% of the
population of Black River are of Indian origin. Using the same principle (of adding
the number of Hindus and Muslims), we can compare this figure with that of other
rural districts like Flacq and Savanne, for instance. In Flacq and Savanne, Indo-
Mauritians (Hindus and Muslims together) make up 81% and 76% of their respective
populations. Black River is, in fact, the district with the smallest number of Hindu
and Muslim Indo-Mauritians. The Indo-Mauritian population of the two urban
districts, Port Louis and Plaines Wilhems, are 59% and 60%, respectively. Here
again, we see parallels between Black River and the two urban regions.

On the basis of the historical, linguistic, religious and reported information in the
paragraphs above, it can be said that Black River is different from the other rural
districts both in terms of its ethnic make-up and its economic situation. In the light of
the discussion on purity of Mauritian, below is a summary of the main points about
Black River that might be relevant for the coming analysis:

1.   most residents are Christians

2.   many of these Christian residents are, or are said to be, Creoles

3.   there is a significant number of Franco-Mauritians living in the district

4.   there are proportionately fewer Indo-Mauritians in Black River than in other districts

5.   inhabitants of Black River generally come from socially and economically deprived backgrounds

6.   Mauritian is extensively used in Black River households

7.   in some respects, Black River looks more like the urban districts than the rural ones

As we have seen above, an important proportion of respondents in this corpus associate purity of Mauritian with Black River. However, most of the Mauritians in this sample do not justify their choice. Therefore, we can only infer possible reasons for their choices. If we take the above ethnic, economic and religious descriptions and the comments of some informants into consideration, then it would seem that purity of Mauritian is associated with:

1.   Christianity; and/or

2.   Creole ethnicity; and/or

3.   Socio-economic poverty/ low social class.

There is no direct evidence to support the association of purity of Mauritian with Christianity and socio-economic status. However, some respondents clearly mention that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken in regions where there are many Creoles. For example,

Ex 6.9 Koz pir kreol dan ban region kot ena buku creoles (Frances, >59, CP).
     Pure Creole is spoken in regions where there are many Creoles .

Frances thinks that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken in Black River, Port-Louis and Plaines Wilhems.

Ex 6.10 Black River parski ena ene gran pourcentage creole laba (Isma, 40-59, IMM).

Black River because of the high percentage of Creoles.

Ex 6.11 Surtout dans les endroits où il y a beaucoup de Créoles (Zubi, 40-59, IMM).

Mostly in places where there are lots of Creoles.

Zubi associates the purest forms of Mauritian with Black River and also the suburbs of Port Louis where there are many Creoles.

Ex 6.12 Coastal regions mostly (Simla, 20-39, IMH).

Simla's response echoes that of Raymond in *ex 6.5* above. She links the purity of Mauritian with not only Black River, but also Grand Port and Savanne – all of these are coastal districts. As we have seen in Chapter 2, coastal regions are usually or stereotypically inhabited by Creoles. Thus, it could be argued that by associating the purest forms of Mauritian with coastal regions, Simla is in fact linking the language to the Creole ethnic group.

It should be noted that there are other explicit responses linking purest forms of Mauritian with the Creole population. But these responses do not include Black River but other districts like Grand Port, Savanne and Port Louis. Interestingly, no respondent says that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken in the district where there are many Christians or people of lowest socio-economic status. Yet, it can be said that Black River is largely a Christian and poor district. But, religion and social status do not seem to be directly linked to purity of Mauritian. From the above responses, it appears that purity of Mauritian is determined by ethnicity. At this stage, we can draw in some of the observations made by Mauritians interviewed in 2002. In these responses, the association between authenticity of Mauritian and Creole ethnicity is brought out. For instance, Raymond quoted in *ex 6.5* above

associates the purest forms of Mauritian with the "Creole person of the coast", whose "accent is different from that of a Mauritian who comes from town". Also, during her interview, Gladys (>59, FM) claims that her own variety of Mauritian is not as good as that spoken by the Creoles.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Creoles of Mauritius are mostly Christians and are generally among the poorest of society. Thus, by extension, one could argue that purity of Mauritian is associated with Christianity and low socio-economic status, as suggested in the schema below.
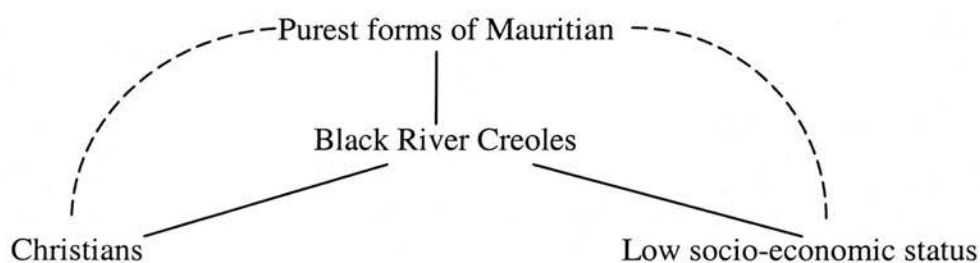
Schema 6.1 Possible link between purity of language, ethnicity, religion and socio-economic status

The notion of indexicality (e.g., Ochs 1992, Agha 1998, Silverstein 2003) is useful in explaining the ideologies expressed here. There are different levels or degrees of indexing involved here. Respondents directly index purity of Mauritian with the Creole ethnic group. By so doing, they indirectly index the language with a series of social, economic, religious and cultural features which are all embedded in the concept *Creole*. I illustrate this point by focusing on religion and social class.

Purity of Mauritian cannot be associated with only religion or socio-economic status. The reason for this is simple. Although the Christian population consists mainly of Creoles, i.e., there is a direct link between Creole ethnicity and Christian faith, it also includes Franco-Mauritians and Mauritians of Coloured/Mixed and Chinese origins.

Thus, directly indexing purest forms of Mauritian with Christianity would mean relating (the purity of) the language with Coloured People and Franco- and Sino-Mauritian speakers. This would not be appropriate as no respondent links Mauritian to any of these three ethnic groups. Hence, it can be said that religion on its own is not a determinant or a direct index of the purity of Mauritian.

Furthermore, in Schema 6.1, socio-economic status is linked to purity of Mauritian through Creole ethnicity. But it cannot simply be said that Mauritians of low social class speak the purest forms of Mauritian. In Mauritius, although poverty is widespread among the Creoles, it is also found among the other ethnic groups. In villages and suburbs of the city and towns, it is common to find poor Mauritians of Indian or Coloured origins. But here again, the interviews and map questionnaires give no indication that purity of Mauritian is linked to poor Indo-Mauritians – even though they are of lower social classes. Therefore, socio-economic status alone is not a factor determining perceptions of language purity.

We are therefore working with different levels or degrees of indexing. What is important here is that people belonging to the Creole group generally share certain characteristics – other than phenotype and culture – and fit into certain stereotypes. For instance, Creoles are generally (thought to be) Christians, uneducated and from the lowest rungs of society. Consequently, by directly indexing Mauritian with the Creoles, respondents indirectly index the language with all that it means to be *Creole*. Therefore, it is only through Creole ethnicity, the primary link, that Mauritian comes to be indirectly indexed with Christianity or social deprivation. Hence, it can be said that speakers of the purest forms of Mauritian are generally

thought to be members of a specific ethnic group, rather than a religious and/or socio-economic one.

The ideological link between Black River, Creole ethnicity and purity of Mauritian is clearly brought out in the perceptual dialect findings. The language ideologies explored in this section illustrate some of the indexical relationships between linguistic forms and social categories. The variety spoken in Black River by the Creole population is believed to be different from that of the rest of the population. The forms used by the Creoles serve to mark them as a distinct social group. The same could probably be said of the forms used by other social groups on the island. In other words, the other varieties, the "less pure" ones, also have their own indexical values. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to address the indexical values of the other varieties. But this theme deserves further investigation. We now briefly consider the relationship between purity of Mauritian and the other districts.

6.3.5   Purity of Mauritian and the eight other districts

Port-Louis is the second district, after Black River, most frequently associated with the purest forms of Mauritian. Port Louis, as shown in Table 6.5, is the district where Mauritian is the language spoken in the greatest number of homes. Other languages, including French and Bhojpuri, are spoken in a relatively small number of houses. Few households use the ancestral languages. Of the twenty-six respondents who have circled Port-Louis on their questionnaire, four specify that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken in the "suburbs of Port-Louis" (for example, Zubi's response in *ex 6.11* above). Hoossain (>59, IMM) goes further by specifically citing Roche-Bois, suburb of Port-Louis, as one of the regions where the purest forms of Mauritian are

spoken. Like many suburbs of the city, its population consists mainly of poor people. As it happens, Roche-Bois is also a predominantly Creole part of the city. An interview with Father Fanchette in 2003, priest of the Roche-Bois parish, confirms that most, if not all, of the inhabitants of Roche Bois are Creoles.

Marya (40-59, IMM) states that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken in the *cités* of Port-Louis (and Rose-Hill, a town in Plaines Wilhems). In Mauritius, the term *cité* (or *cité ouvrière*) is used to describe specifically designated regions usually in the suburbs of the city or towns (Moutou 1996). A *cité* consists of government-built blocks made of several flats, run by the National Housing Development Corporation (NHDC). The flats which contain basic amenities are either taken on rent or bought from the State. The inhabitants of *cités* are generally thought to be of the lowest classes of society. And again, we find mostly Creoles living in these state houses. According to Moutou (1996: 115), 70% to 80% of the inhabitants of *cités* are Afro-Mauritians. Because of the poor living conditions in the *cités*, social problems like drugs, youth delinquency, alcoholism and prostitution are common in these regions. But despite all their social and financial problems, the people of *cités,* that is, mostly Creoles, are thought to speak the purest forms of Mauritian.

Marya makes explicit the link between *cités* and Creole ethnicity when she goes on to say

Ex 6.13 Koz kreol pli pir dan ban region kot ena pli buku Kreol
    Purest Creole is spoken in those regions where there are most Creoles.

It can therefore be said that Marya's views that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken (a) in the suburbs of the city and towns and (b) in regions where there are

mostly Creoles, corroborate each other. Marya, like the respondents quoted in the previous section, highlights the direct index between purity of the language and Creole ethnicity. She differs from the other respondents in that she ascribes a different physical location to the Creoles. For her, "there are most Creoles" in *cités* – and not Black River. Therefore, Marya's response further confirms the important link between purest forms of Mauritian and regions where there are mostly Creoles.

Given that respondents were only required to circle the district where the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken, most respondents did not give a specific answer as to where exactly in Port- Louis (or other districts) these forms were used. Vidya (40-59, IMH), for instance, states that the purest forms of the language are spoken in Black River and parts of Port-Louis. But she does not specify which parts of Port Louis. Also, Frances (>59, CP) circles Port-Louis and suggests that it is the Creoles who use the purest forms of Mauritian (his response is quoted in *ex 6.9* above). Given that Creoles live mostly in the suburbs of Port-Louis, Frances' response could possibly be narrowed down to the equivalent of Marya's *cités* in the capital city. In essence therefore, respondents assign similar indexical values to linguistic forms. Their responses differ because they associate different localities to the same Creole ethnic group.

If Frances and Marya argue that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken in Port-Louis because of the important Creole population living there, Kamal (13-19, CP) circles Port-Louis because it is the region where "old forms of Creole have been preserved". Kamal puts forward a different ideology of "authenticity". He argues that people first settled in Port-Louis and that is why the purest forms of Mauritian are

spoken there. Unlike most of the respondents quoted so far, Kamal associates purity of language with history. Old forms are the purest while the new ones are, in some sense then, tainted. Innovations, therefore, tend to be perceived negatively. Kamal's comments fit well into the prescriptive traditions which favour conservative forms over innovative ones (e.g., the case of English (Mugglestone 1995)). It could be argued that Kamal adopts a non-ethnic line of reasoning in that he indexes linguistic authenticity with history rather than ethnicity. However, Kamal's response could have some implicit ethnic undertones. The Creole community is historically older than the Indo-Mauritian community (chapters 2 and 7). The Creoles are therefore more likely to have preserved "the old forms" of Mauritian than the Indo-Mauritians who were still using their ancestral languages after their arrival on the island (Chapter 2). By directly indexing purity of Mauritian with "age", Kamal indirectly indexes linguistic authenticity with Creole ethnicity. Kamal's argument could therefore be described as ethnic as well.

Raziana (20-39, IMM) also adopts an approach that has implicit ethnic connotations. She argues that it is in Port-Louis that the "most beautiful Creole" (*pli zoli kreol)* is spoken. In contrast, in rural places like Rivière du Rempart (a stereotypically very Indian area), there is "no beautiful Creole" (*pena zoli kreol laba*). She aestheticises purity, which she, in turn, defines by the absence of Indian languages in the spoken variety of Mauritian:

*Ex 6.14 Ena Morisien koz barok (...) Dan Rivière du Rempart, servi buku langaz
     indien. Pena zoli kreol laba.*
     Some Mauritians speak in a "broken" way. (...) In Rivière du Rempart, people often use Indian languages. There is no beautiful Creole there.

Raziana's description of the purest forms of Mauritian parallel descriptions of the standard (e.g., Milroy & Milroy 1991, Mugglestone 1995) which is seen as the most beautiful form of the language. Purest Mauritian, therefore, has an aesthetic value which other varieties lack. For Raziana, pure Mauritian is a language that is not influenced by other languages, especially Indian languages. It follows that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken in regions where there is the least number of Indian-speaking people. The "most beautiful" Mauritian is therefore spoken by Mauritians of non-Indian origins. Raziana indexes linguistic authenticity with non-Indian ethnicity. The speakers of purest Mauritian could therefore include Sino-Mauritians, Coloured People, Afro-Mauritians and Franco-Mauritians. Given the demographics of Port-Louis and the discussion in the section above, it would be reasonable to claim that Raziana indexes purity of Mauritian with Creole ethnicity specifically rather than broadly non-Indian ethnicity.

Akmez (20-39, IMM) and Hoossain (>59, IMM) echo Raziana when they say that the purest forms are spoken in Port Louis and Plaines Wilhems, and Black River and Port-Louis, respectively, because in the "Creole of rural regions", there is the influence of Bhojpuri and English. Zahra (>59, IMM) adopts a similar line of reasoning although she does not mention Port Louis but rather Grand Port and Savanne as the regions where the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken. She believes that the inhabitants of Grand Port and Savanne speak the "Creole form of Creole" (*kreol kreol mem* – similar views are expressed in the 2002 survey, e.g., Chapter 4*)*. She argues that in Grand Port and Savanne, the language is "least influenced by French and Bhojpuri".

Zahra's observation can be supported by census figures. Table 6.5 shows that, after Black River, Savanne is the rural district where Bhojpuri is spoken in the smallest number of homes. In both Grand Port and Savanne, Mauritian is spoken in more than 70% of homes and Bhojpuri in less than 17%. They thus generally differ from rural districts like Flacq, Pamplemousses and Rivière du Rempart where Bhojpuri is spoken in more than 20% of homes. Hence, the forms of Mauritian spoken in Grand Port and Savanne might not be influenced by Bhojpuri as the Mauritian in some of the other rural districts. Also, we would expect the influence of French to be minimal compared to the urban districts and Black River where French is the next most spoken language in the homes after Mauritian. Thus, relative to the Mauritian spoken in other districts, the language spoken in Grand Port and Savanne indeed seems to be less in contact with the two main external influences (French and Bhojpuri). Hence, the lack of purity is appreciably attenuated in Grand Port and Savanne. Akmez and the other respondents quoted here mostly index purity of Mauritian with non-Indian influence/ethnicity. These responses further emphasise the indexical relationships between linguistic forms and social groups on the island.

A different ideology of linguistic authenticity is brought out in Pauline's response. Like Zahra, Pauline cites Grand Port as the district where the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken. However, Pauline's definition of language purity differs slightly from that of Zahra and instead, closely resembles that of Kamal. She describes pure Mauritian as the "Creole of the origin" (*le créole de l'origine*) and clearly puts forward the indexical link between linguistic authenticity and African/Creole identity. She specifically says that it is the inhabitants of Mahebourg, a village in Grand Port, who speak the purest forms of Mauritian. For her,

Ex 6.15 C'est où tout a commencé. C'est le lien avec l'Afrique (…) Là-bas, on se sent près de l'esclavage.
It's where everything started. It's the link with Africa (…) There, we feel close to slavery.

Mahebourg is one of the oldest settlements in Mauritius. The harbour was situated in Grand Port during Dutch settlement. It was only in the 18th century that the harbour was shifted from the district of Grand Port to Port Louis. Also, Grand Port was one of the major sites for the battle between the British and the French in 1810. As such, therefore, Grand Port could be seen as a relatively old region. And according to Pauline, the language spoken in that region (especially Mahebourg) has preserved this ancient feel and is thus, very pure. She goes on to say that the Mauritian spoken in other regions has been influenced by other languages, especially the Indian ones, and has lost this original purity. In other words, like Zahra, she believes that the purest forms of Mauritian are those that have least contact with other languages.

This indexical link between oldest and purest forms of Mauritian is also brought out in Hoossain's (>59, IMM) response. He claims that the variety of "Creole spoken before the 1960s is more authentic, purer". Although he circles Black River and Port-Louis as the districts where this "more authentic Creole" is spoken, he adds that the purest or most authentic forms of all are spoken by the inhabitants of Rodrigues (Eric expresses a similar view in *ex 6.8*). According to the 2000 Population Census, 96% of the inhabitants of Rodrigues usually speak Mauritian at home and claim to have only Mauritian as their ancestral language. Less than 3% claim to have Mauritian along with another language as the "language of their forefathers". The general perception is that the inhabitants of Rodrigues have maintained a traditional lifestyle. This small island is sometimes described as being like pre-independence Mauritius

when the pace of life was generally slower and people were less westernised. In this sense then, Rodrigues is associated with olden times and preserved traditions. Hence, it is not surprising that the oldest and consequently, purest (from Hoossain's perspective) forms of Mauritian are spoken in Rodrigues. It should be noted that in the 2002 survey, Eric (20-39, FM) states,

Ex 6.16 Pour trouver le Créole authentique, il faut aller à Rodrigues
To find the authentic Creole, one has to go to Rodrigues.

Eric explains that the people of Rodrigues have maintained their traditional way of life and old way of speaking Mauritian. Like Hoossain, Kamal and Pauline, he believes that the "most authentic Creole" is the old one; not the one currently spoken that has been influenced by other languages.

We have here a recurring language ideology. Respondents identify some kind of older form of Mauritian. This "old" form of Mauritian is set in opposition to the "new" forms of the language. For many respondents, old Mauritian is characterised by minimal influence from other linguistic systems. It is not clear how this old form was kept in its original pristine state and preserved from influences of other linguistic systems. Presumably, there would have been some degrees of language change and innovation. But interviewees' responses suggest that there is one variety (or many varieties) of Mauritian that is static and does not change. This is the old variety of the language. Many interviewees index this old form with linguistic purity.

If Grand Port is cited frequently because of its historical importance, Plaines Wilhems is identified with pure Mauritian for the opposite reason. For instance, Tonton (>59, CP), interviewed in 2002 and 2003, believes that the purest forms of

Creole are spoken in both Port-Louis and Plaines Wilhems. He chooses these two districts because he thinks that the people living there are "more developed" (*plus développés*). Thus, he differs from Kamal, Hoossain and Pauline in saying that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken in urban and modern regions where people are less traditional and more refined. Here is what Tonton has to say:

Ex 6.17 En ville, nous parlons un créole pur parce que les personnes sont plus développées (...) Le créole pur est plus moderne, c'est agréable d'y écouter. Ça a de l'humour, ça a un ton à lui. Ça devient presqu'un langage.
In towns, we speak pure Creole because people are more developed. (...) Pure Creole is more modern, it's pleasant to listen to. It has humour, a tune of its own. (...) It almost becomes a language.

For Tonton, the Mauritian variety spoken in the urban regions is so pure and pleasant that it can almost be described as a language. Tonton states his general position as being that Mauritian is only a dialect or a broken variety of French. Tonton's stance could be described as non-ethnic in that he discusses the situation from a linguistic rather than an ethnic perspective. His ideology of linguistic purity is based around notions of sophistication and modernity (cf. Mira in *ex 6.7* above).

Mahmad (20-39, IMM) also believes that the inhabitants of Port-Louis, Plaines Wilhems and in addition Moka speak the purest forms of Mauritian. Although Mahmad says the urban-dwellers use the purest forms of Mauritian, i.e., *ban dimun la vil*, he includes a rural region, Moka, in his response. As we have seen above, Ackmez (20-39, IMM) argues that in rural places, Mauritians speak more Bhojpuri and English, whereas in towns and in the city, the "pure Creole" is spoken. Therefore, although Mahmad, Ackmez and Tonton put forward different ideologies of linguistic purity, they all claim that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken by urban-dwellers. Urban Mauritian seems to have evolved away from the influence of

Indian languages. Mahmad, Ackmez and Tonton suggest that this influence is strongest in rural regions where people still speak Bhojpuri and other ancestral languages. Thus, they diverge in certain respects from informants like Zahra and Eric, who agree that pure Mauritian is the variety least influenced by other languages but who claim that it is spoken in rural regions. However, note that Zahra and Hoossain, for instance, mention those rural districts which are traditionally thought to have the smallest Indo-Mauritian population. We again see the repetition of the following theme: influence from Indian languages somehow makes users' Mauritian less pure. This theme cuts across people with different perceptions of exactly where purest Mauritian is spoken. In other words, while some respondents believe that this influence is minimal in towns, others argue that this is the case in the rural districts with fewest Indo-Mauritians.

The paragraphs above show the importance of the urban districts and the two rural districts Grand Port and Savanne – that is, R2 – in informants' responses. The other rural districts were also mentioned as regions where the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken. However, they were rarely mentioned in isolation – Table 6.3 shows that Flacq is mentioned in isolation twice and Moka once while the two other rural districts Rivière du Rempart and Pamplemousses are always mentioned in combination with other places. The general trend is for these rural districts to be circled alongside (one, two or all of) the most common districts associated with purity of Mauritian, i.e., Black River, Port Louis and Grand Port. Given the heterogeneous demographics and linguistic situation of these rural districts, it is difficult to explain their presence in Table 6.3 along ethnic or linguistic lines. Respondents did not put forward any concrete reason to justify their choices of these

rural districts. Given the tendencies just described – i.e., they are generally circled together with other rural regions mostly – we could possibly claim that these districts are chosen just because they are rural. The notion of indirect indexicality is useful in explaining the choice of these rural districts.

Section 6.3.4 shows that there is a direct indexical link between purest forms of Mauritian and Black River. Also, there is a direct index between rurality and Black River. Other districts like Flacq, Moka, Rivière du Rempart and Pamplemousses are also directly indexed with rurality. Through the direct index "rurality", therefore, Flacq, Moka, Rivière du Rempart and Pamplemousses are indirectly indexed with purest forms of Mauritian, as illustrated in the schema below.

Purest forms of Mauritian

Black River

Rurality   Creole ethnicity   Christianity

Flacq, Moka, Rivière du Rempart and Pamplemousses
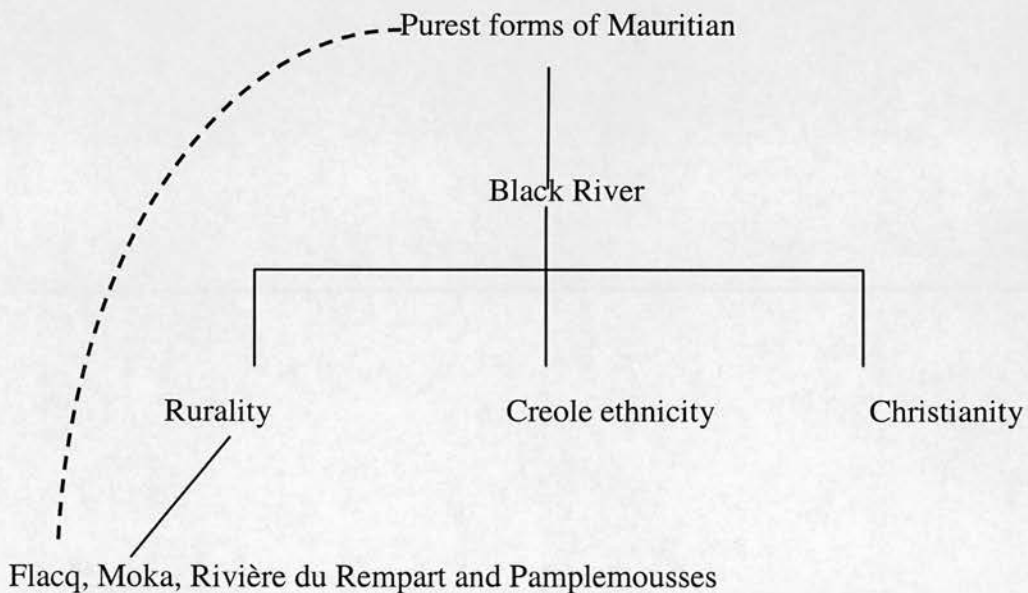
Schema 6.2. Indexicality and rurality

Schema 6.2 shows that there is a direct link between Black River, rurality, Creole ethnicity and Christianity. Other districts like Flacq, Moka, Rivière du Rempart and Pamplemousses share the direct index with rurality, but not Creole ethnicity and Christianity. Schema 6.2 shows how through rurality, we have an indirect index

between purest forms of Mauritian and Flacq, Moka, Rivière du Rempart and Pamplemousses. Through this indirect index, therefore, these districts come to be associated with purity of Mauritian. Also, it seems that in this small sample, the identification of these rural regions with pure Mauritian is not motivated by ethnic, linguistic or socio-economic considerations – as opposed to the cases of Black River and Port Louis, for instance. A further study could assess the validity of this hypothesis.

In the paragraphs below, I explore the ideologies of language purity in the light of these findings and the ones discussed in section 6.2.

6.4   Ideologies of linguistic purity

The paragraphs above show that there are various ideologies of linguistic purity prevalent in Mauritian community. It was the purpose of this study to leave it open for respondents to define the notion of "language purity". Providing a definition might have directed informants to specific responses and restricted the range of responses obtained in this part of the study. We first discuss the notion of purity as understood in the questionnaires. In this part of the chapter, we will also draw on responses given in the 2002 survey.

It is clear that most respondents in this corpus have some understanding of purity. Somebody like Sharon (20-39, CP) who argues that "in all districts, there are some purest forms of Creole" also has intuitions about this concept. If that was not the case, then she would have had trouble with the notion "purest forms of Creole" and would clearly not have said that pure forms of the language can be found in all

districts. In other words, the notion exists in the wider speech community and is not simply an artefact of my study. Although ideologies of linguistic purity seem to vary significantly, they generally converge towards a few specific themes. The various notions of "language purity" with respect to Mauritian can be grouped under four subheadings:

1. language spoken by the Creoles

2. least interference from other languages

3. most traditional/ancient forms of Mauritian

4. most modern forms of Mauritian

Classification (1) is one based on ethnic and socio-historical arguments. Classifications (3) and (4) are exact opposites while classification (2) can be cited along with (3) and (4). Hence, none of these definitions are mutually exclusive except for (3) and (4). Thus, we can have these various combinations of definitions when describing "linguistic purity":

*   (1) and (3): the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken by the Creoles because they have preserved the oldest forms of the language. Creoles are here associated with conservatism.

*   (1) and (2): the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken by the Creoles because their language is least influenced by other languages – probably because they have no Indian ancestral language (chapters 2 and 7).

*   (1) and (4): the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken by the Creoles because they use or have developed the most modern forms of the language. Creoles are here seen as innovators.

*   (2) and (3): the purest forms of Mauritian are the oldest forms of the language, which show the least influence from other languages.

- (2) and (4): the purest forms of Mauritian are the most modern forms of the language, which have evolved into a distinct entity and have been purified of the influence of other linguistic systems.

In most of these combinations, we can see that transfer is not compatible with linguistic purity. In other words, the various notions of language purity and authenticity cannot accommodate linguistic interference. On the basis of the above observations, we could claim that (a) there is clearly an understanding of language purity among the respondents and (b) this understanding is multi-faceted, even paradoxical if we look across the definitions.

We can supplement these findings by considering the responses to the use of Mauritian in the written domain. In Chapter 4, we have seen the emergence of the notion of "true", "pure" or "authentic" Mauritian. Although respondents use such terms as "true Creole" *(vre kreol)* and "pure Creole" *(pir kreol)* with regards to written Mauritian, they do not make use of the opposites of these adjectives when describing other varieties of the language. That is, in this sample, there are no terms as "false Creole" *(fos kreol, menti menti kreol)* or "impure Creole" *(kreol impir)*. We find only one item of the binary pairs commonly used to describe the standard and regional varieties (section 6.1). Respondents, therefore, do not evolve in the binary framework that we commonly find for standardised languages (e.g., Milroy & Milroy 1991). Let us return to our earlier discussion on orthography and draw on attitudes expressed there to further inform our understanding of what makes some forms of Mauritian "pure". So, what exactly is pure Mauritian in the written domain then?

In the writing system, "true", "pure" or "authentic" Mauritian is defined by divergence from the French orthographic conventions. This orthography is described as "the creole form of Creole" *(kreol kreol mem,* Rehaz (20-39, IMM)), "pure Creole" *(pir kreol,* Vidya (40-59, IMH)) and "true Creole" *(vre kreol,* Jayen (20-39, IMH)). Thus, in some sense, true or pure written Mauritian is a language that "stands on its own" and does not show influence from other languages, especially not its lexifier. In Chapter 4, we explored some of these responses. For the purposes of this chapter, it should suffice to note that in the written domain too, there is an understanding of what counts as "pure", "real" or "true" Mauritian.

Furthermore, respondents express similar ideologies regarding purity of oral and written Mauritian. In both cases, purity can be defined in terms of degree of influence from other linguistic systems. However, in the written domain, respondents refer solely to French influence whereas in the oral one, the tendency is to allude to Indian languages. In fact, in the 2003 questionnaire, only Zahra (>59, IMM) specifically mentions that the purest form of Mauritian is spoken in regions where there is the least "French and Bhojpuri influence". Other respondents refer to least influence from Indian languages only. In the 2002 survey, reference is never made to the influence of Indian languages on written Mauritian. Why then is French – and not Indian languages – seen as a threat to the purity of written Mauritian?

A likely explanation revolves around the degree of similarity between the writing system of Mauritian and those of French and Indian languages. Mauritian, like French, is written in the Roman script (Chapter 4). Bhojpuri, the most widely used Indian language on the island, is not generally used in written domains while Hindi is

written in the Devanagari script. Therefore, the closest menace to Mauritian in the written domain is French. The lexifier language poses a threat to the purity of Mauritian because it uses the same script, and therefore, most importantly, its spelling conventions are readily transferred onto the language.

As for the Devanagari script, it has never been used for Mauritian orthography. Thus, there is no basis for comparison between the writing systems of Indian languages and that of Mauritian. In other words, in the written domain, Indian languages show maximal deviation from Mauritian in that their very scripts are completely different. As such, they represent no menace to written Mauritian. For this reason, French challenges the existence of a distinct identity for written Mauritian in a way that Indian languages cannot do. Since Mauritian has only recently been gaining grounds in the written domain, it is still in a delicate situation with respect to other written languages, especially its widely used lexifier. If its orthography resembles too closely that of French, it risks, in the long run, being absorbed by the latter and losing its specificities and maybe ultimately, its very *raison d'être* as a written language. Hence, in the written context, true/pure Mauritian is an expression of "creoleness" itself (*kreol kreol mem*) and thus, is independent from French orthography.

As far as spoken Mauritian is concerned, it faces functional competition from both the H variety French and the L variety, Bhojpuri (see Figure 2.1 in Chapter 2). It is cornered by these two varieties. That is, it faces downward and upward competition. As we have just seen, Indian languages are not in competition with Mauritian in the written domain because their scripts are completely different. However, in the oral domain, the presence of Bhojpuri in rural places poses a threat to the use of pure

Mauritian. That is, the relatively extensive use of Bhojpuri is likely to influence the way people in these regions speak Mauritian. An interesting contrast can be drawn between my findings and those of Eisenlohr (2004). While my interviewees highlight the influence of Bhojpuri on varieties of Mauritian, Eisenlohr (2004: 70) suggests that it is Mauritian that is a threat to Bhojpuri, which is "characterized by the ample use of Creole borrowings or lexical items of Creole origin". It is clear that the two linguistic varieties can both affect each other. Here again, purity (of both languages) is defined in terms of absence of influence from other linguistic systems. For both Bhojpuri and Mauritian, purity is tied with ideologies of cultural authenticity (more on this in the following chapter). Also, as shown in section 6.2, many 2002 informants believe that the Mauritian variety spoken by Franco-Mauritians is influenced by French and as such, is not "pure Creole". The infiltration of Bhojpuri and/or French words, intonation and pronunciation in Mauritian is seen as contamination of an otherwise pure system. It could therefore be said that language contact is not generally viewed positively by respondents. It seems that they associate contact with reduced purity (also, Eriksen 1999, Eisenlohr 2004).

The notion of contact and contamination is also relevant to the glosses laid out in (1), (3) and (4) above. For instance, according to some respondents, the oldest and hence, purest forms of Mauritian are thought to have been preserved in specific regions. Pauline associates the old forms of Mauritian with an old village which, she thinks, has maintained the traditional way of life. She dates the lifestyle back to the time of slavery, i.e., before the arrival of Indian indentured labourers. Necessarily, at that time, there was no or minimal contact with Indian languages. Consequently, the Mauritian variety spoken then would not have been influenced by Indian languages.

For her and people sharing her language ideologies, this makes the language purer in some sense. Tonton also overtly makes this contact-contamination link when he describes the modern forms of Mauritian as the purest ones because they are least influenced by other languages. Thus, it can be seen that this idea of contact and contamination persists even when respondents argue along the lines of old and modern forms of the language.

Furthermore, we can establish a link between reason (1) and the contact-contamination argument. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the slaves, unlike the indentured labourers, were not allowed to keep their languages and cultures. In fact, they were separated from those who were from the same tribe or region as them. Thus, they were devoid of their cultural and linguistic identity. Compared to the colonisers and the indentured labourers, the slaves were, in some sense, culturally "naked" (Munasinghe 1997). They were thus open to another culture and language. They acquired Mauritian which became their mother-tongue. Because they have been deprived of their linguistic heritage, the descendants of slaves do not have an ancestral African language – not in the way that Indo-, Sino- or Franco-Mauritians do. Hence, the Mauritian variety they use at home or with Afro-Mauritian friends is not in contact with, and subject to influence from, ancestral languages. In this sense then, Creoles can be said to speak the purest forms of Mauritian. In the following chapter, we explore the indexical link between Creoles and Mauritian. But at this stage, it suffices to say that the lack of ancestral language influence for Creoles could strengthen the association between this ethnic group and pure Mauritian.

It is interesting that in the case of Mauritian, people of the lowest classes are seen as speaking the purest form of the language. In this respect, Mauritian differs from Western European languages whose prescriptive norms "are based to a significant extent upon the usage of the elite" (Myhill 2004: 37). According to Myhill (2004), Western linguists reject prescriptivism because it is contrary to egalitarian principles. Indeed, by favouring the language usage of the elite, prescriptivism reinforces the social division between the elites and the lower classes. Elites' language is seen as the best or most correct usage while that of lower social classes is generally perceived as incorrect. Social elites' usage, therefore, serves as the benchmark against which the correctness of other social classes' language is assessed. This is clearly not the case for Mauritian. In fact, Mauritian finds itself in a completely opposite situation. It is those of the lowest socio-economic class who are viewed as the speakers of the purest forms of the language. Their variety is to be emulated. In this sample, the social elites, the Franco-Mauritians, do not claim to speak the best or purest form of the language. Some of them even acknowledge the superiority of the variety used by the Creoles (e.g., Raymond in *ex 6.5*, Gladys in section 6.4). If Mauritian were to become a language with officially recognised prescriptive norms, authoritative and comprehensive dictionaries and grammars, then the Creoles could probably provide users with forms that are prescriptively "correct". That Creoles act as norm-setters for the language could in the long run help in enhancing their social status (Chapter 7).

6.5   Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed questions relating to purity of Mauritian. Both the questionnaires and survey have shown that there are different varieties of Mauritian

spoken on the island. A general division is along urban and rural lines. It seems that rural regions, with the exception of Black River, tend to be associated with *Indianness*. Generally, the Franco-Mauritians are thought to have a different way of talking Mauritian, i.e., they are said to speak Mauritian with a French accent.

Furthermore, the questionnaires and the survey show that the notion of linguistic purity exists in the Mauritian speech community. The previous section shows that there can be a lot of variability in how purity is defined in the local context. It is interesting to note that even for a non-standard language, there are prescriptive norms prevalent in the speech community. For instance, the "true" or "pure" Mauritian orthography is the one that shows maximal deviation from French while "pure" spoken Mauritian shows the least interference from any other language. Thus, Mauritians in these corpora have parameters by which they judge the correctness of the language varieties. It is interesting that although these parameters are not formally established in grammar books, they seem to be shared by respondents in these two small and diverse samples.

The discussion in the above sections suggests that purity of Mauritian is linked with ethnicity and old/new forms of the language. When analysing responses to the 2003 questionnaires, we have assumed that in linking the language with a region, respondents are in fact linking the language with the inhabitants of the region. This goes in line with Preston's research on folk linguistics (Preston 1993) and much language attitude work (e.g., Giles & Bourhis 1976, Edwards 1982, Bonner 2001, Bilaniuk 2003, Echeverria 2003). Not only does this mean that the language is indexed with the inhabitants' ethnicity, socio-economic status and level of education,

but also with the stereotypes that other Mauritians have of the group. This is seen in the indexical relationship between purest forms of Mauritian and Creole ethnicity. This chapter has highlighted the ethnic index of Mauritian.

Moreover, in this chapter, we have discussed the findings of a method never used in the Mauritian context before: perceptual dialect maps. In the map-questionnaires, the division is made solely on a district basis. However, some informants name some specific part within a district where they think that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken. Thus, a further study could divide the districts into smaller regions. However, this should be done in such a way as not to overwhelm respondents with a complicated map. If all villages are included, then there is a risk that respondents might get confused. Therefore, choices will have to be made as to which villages to include and which to reject. But these choices could, in turn, bias informants' responses. A pilot study could assess the frequencies of the most quoted regions associated with the purest forms of Mauritian. Then, on the basis of the findings of this pilot study, a map including the nine districts and also the most quoted regions can be drawn. Respondents can then be asked to circle the regions where they think that the purest forms of Mauritian are spoken.

Another possibility is to adopt the methodology that has been used by perceptual dialectologists in other speech communities (e.g., Baugh 1993, Preston 1999). Respondents can be given blank maps and then asked to name and circle the regions on the map where the purest, standard, most beautiful and/or most pleasant forms of Mauritian are spoken. However, since this method has never been used in the Mauritian context, respondents might need a good deal of training before being able

to complete such a task. Also, responses might range from districts to specific regions in villages. This might lead to problems with processing the data.

Finally, findings about the purest forms of a non-standard language have implications for standardisation of the language. As we saw in Chapter 4, a committee has recently been set up to devise an official standard for Mauritian and efforts are being made by the Church to promote a standard form of Mauritian. But personal observation and discussions with Mauritians suggest that the "Church's standard" is neither extensively accepted nor widely used. Thus, it is important for policy makers and language planners to consider the attitudes of Mauritians towards the different varieties of Mauritian when devising and promoting a standard form. In order to do so, a large-scale study using methods similar to the ones used by perceptual dialectologists should be carried out. Mauritian has an advantage over other languages studied by perceptual dialectologists (e.g., Turkish by Demirci & Kleiner 1993, American English by Preston 1999, Canadian French by Evans 2002, Italian by Romanello 2002): it is still a non-standard language – or at least, thought to be a non-standard language by its users. Therefore, perceptual dialectology can have direct practical implications on standardisation. We have the opportunity to ensure that applied linguistic policies are implemented in such a way that standard forms actually coincide with general perceptions of correctness or purity. If we can marry work done in both empirical research and education and social planning, there will be minimal discrepancy between perceived correctness and actual prescriptive norms.

Chapter Seven

Who Owns Mauritian?

7.0 Introduction

The preceding chapters have highlighted the importance of Mauritian as a language of inter-ethnic communication and also the link between Mauritian and the Creole ethnic group. Although Mauritian is sometimes associated with the Creoles, it is not clear whether the language can be said to belong to that group or, for that matter, to any other group on the island. Mauritian has clearly acquired a national dimension and is, therefore, not restricted to the Creoles only. Does this mean that all Mauritians own the Mauritian language? In what sense might a whole nation own the language while simultaneously, only a small segment of the population is associated with the language? The ambiguous situation of Mauritian raises difficult issues, some of which will be addressed in this chapter. In the first part of this chapter, I discuss the linguistic situation of Mauritius. In the second part, I analyse the concept of linguistic ownership. The third part focuses on linguistic ownership in the Mauritian context. In the following four sections, I discuss the vexed question of ownership of Mauritian and its role as a national and ethnic language. I finally conclude with a brief summary.

7.1 Background

Languages are associated with specific groups – e.g., social, ethnic, age, rural/urban, national groups (Fasold 1984). Languages, therefore, are not simply neutral tools of

communication. As shown in the preceding chapters, they are ideologically loaded. In the words of Wa Thiong'o (1986: 13), "Language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture".

In Mauritius, most of the eleven languages recorded in the census are clearly associated with ethnic or social groups. The language-ethnicity link is made obvious by the fact that many languages are only spoken by given groups. In other words, many of the languages are only used for in-group communication. Stein (1982) describes these languages as *langues communautaires* and opposes them to Mauritian, French and English, the *langues supra-communautaires*. Because of their in-group value, the "community languages" can be used to include or exclude participants in an interaction. That is, language can be used as a tool of inclusion and exclusion. It is one of the ways in which people can define what counts as "us" and what counts as "them". If person A modifies his/her speech to match that of B, then A is, in a way, identifying with B – it could be interpreted as a signal of group membership. But if A modifies his/her speech so as to diverge from B, then A is distancing herself/himself from B – A is in one group and B is in another group. A does not want to identify with, or gain the approval of, B. Thus, A can accommodate or nonaccommodate his/her speech to suit B (Giles & Powesland 1975).

Giles & Powesland's accommodation theory (1975) takes on a special significance in a multilingual and multiethnic setting like Mauritius. For example, in a group where there are two Mauritians who speak Hindi and one who does not, the Hindi-speakers could decide to use Hindi. If they did, they would be diverging from the non-Hindi-

speaking participant and excluding him/her from the interaction. This can be interpreted as a sign of intergroup differences or even an expression of hostility. But if they choose Mauritian, a language known by all Mauritians, they accommodate to the linguistic abilities of the other person. In other words, they converge towards the other person. The widespread knowledge of Mauritian makes it an ideal language for use in inter-ethnic communication.

Although the intra-ethnic languages are taught in primary and religious schools, most of them are disappearing from the Mauritian linguistic landscape. The use of Marathi and Telugu, for instance, is limited to religious and cultural domains (Bissoonauth & Offord 2001). They are not used for everyday interactions. Even though languages like Hindi and Urdu are not in a precarious position, they are not used in daily routines by the Mauritian population (Rajah-Carrim 2004a). In other words, they act as indexes of identity rather than means of communication.

However, it might reasonable to claim that as long as Mauritians identify strongly with their Asian ancestry, these languages are unlikely to disappear completely. Efforts might be made by some members who strongly identify with their ancestral origins to maintain the language. Cultural organisations might be set up, where the ethnic language could be taught. The Muslim Surtees of Mauritius (Chapter 2), for instance, have a cultural group called *Surtee Soonnee Mussulman Society* (SSMS). This society offers a platform where members of the Surtee Muslim community can meet. Attempts have been made to promote Gujerati (Surtee Soonnee Mussulman

Society 1998). However, personal observation shows that the language is still not widely used by the Surtees (also, Stein 1982).

The fact that the state provides financial aid for the establishment of cultural and religious groups also helps in the promotion of cultural traditions and ensures the survival of ancestral languages (Rajah 2003). One of the aims of the Government is to promote cultural diversity – *L'unité dans la diversité* ("Unity in diversity") is a well-known motto in Mauritius. It is not surprising that the various ethnic groups in Mauritius have availed themselves of this financial aid and set up cultural organisations. Members of the opposition argue that the promotion of cultural diversity fosters competition among the various ethnic/religious groups on the island and weakens the sense of unity and belonging. That is, an emphasis on diversity allows ethnic identity to take precedence over national identity. According to some members of the general public, instead of helping in nation-building, these cultural organisations compartmentalise Mauritian society into different groups and thus foster communalism (Rajah 2003). It should be noted that the situation in Mauritius is reminiscent of that of other African countries like Sierra Leone and Sudan where the "strongest loyalties usually lie with the extended family, language community and ethnicity" (Kamanda 2002: 195). Belonging to the same nation is not as binding an element as belonging to subgroups within that nation.

Presently in Mauritius, there are cultural groups for Marathis, Telugus, Hindus, Muslims and Chinese. *Le Centre Culturel Nelson Mandela* is a centre for people of African origins, i.e., the Creoles. This cultural organisation does not promote African

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languages, but Mauritian. Herein lies a paradox. On the one hand, Mauritian is claimed to be and promoted as a national language (Chapter 2). As a national language, its functions would be "to identify the nation and unite the people of the nation" (Holmes 1992: 105). But on the other hand, aspects of the institutionalisation of Mauritian point to it being an ethnic language, associated with the Creoles of Mauritius. This leaves us with the question of *who owns Mauritian?* Does the language belong to the whole Mauritian nation or only to those people of African ancestry? Does the fact that creoles came out of colonial plantation estates link Mauritian inescapably to the descendants of slaves? Or has the language evolved from an ethnic one to a national one? In other words, whose right is it to claim ownership of Mauritian?

In an attempt to answer these questions, I discuss below the notion of linguistic ownership as used in the literature. I assess the relevance of the definitions of linguistic ownership to the Mauritian context. I show that the situation of Mauritian is intricate and the above questions cannot be straightforwardly answered.

7.2 Linguistic ownership

The question of linguistic ownership is complex. In the paragraphs below, we analyse some of the definitions of linguistic ownership and discuss their relevance to the Mauritian context. We will first explore the notion of *linguistic ownership* with respect to English. For reasons of clarity and simplicity, the following discussion focuses on British speakers as owners of English.

The concept of ownership has been discussed especially with reference to English (e.g., Widdowson 1994, Norton 1997, Evans 2002, Matsuda 2003). Indeed, this concept is significant in post-colonial countries like India, Singapore and South Africa, for instance, where English is a lingua franca and for some, also a mother-tongue (Ramanathan 1999, Ridge 2000, Klerk 2003). In the very early colonial era when English was not as widespread as it is today, it would be fairly easy to say that the British were the only native speakers of English and had a certain degree of exclusivity over it – and consequently, owned the language. Thus, the British owned English because it was their mother-tongue and their language was generally not used as a lingua franca by other nations. But with colonisation, slavery and migration, the situation has become complex. Nowadays, English is a world lingua franca with many non-native speakers. Given this state of affairs, the question of ownership of the language has become problematic. The British are not the only native speakers of English and consequently, no longer hold their exclusivity over the language. Indeed, Indians speak English, Singaporeans speak English and Mauritians speak English – either as a native language or as a foreign language.

Not only are there different dialects of English spoken within the United Kingdom, but there are also different varieties of English spoken across the world. We can talk of *World Englishes* and not simply of *the English language* (e.g., Kachru 1986, Bhatt 2001, Yano 2001, Mesthrie 2003). Thus, English is the superordinate term which comprises different varieties of Englishes. For instance, there is Indian English, Australian English and South African English. In these countries, English has been appropriated and adapted to the local situation. Other languages spoken by the

Indians and South Africans have influenced the variety of English spoken in India and South Africa, respectively. For instance, according to Wiltshire & Moon (2003), the phonetic stress patterns in Indian English differ from the ones in American English. This difference could be said to give an Indian touch to their Indian English. Similar nativisation processes can be observed in other international varieties of English (e.g., Udofot 2002 for Nigerian English). Although these processes modify the variety of English spoken by these people, they do not alter the underlying fact that these people are indeed using English. In other words, the language that these people are using at home is clearly English and not Hindi or any other Indian language. In lay terms, it might be said that "they speak English with an Indian accent", but this further confirms the popular intuition that they are using English.

Thus, if ownership is defined in terms of nativeness and degree of exclusivity, then the question of ownership of English becomes problematic. As we have seen above, through colonisation and migration, English has become the mother-tongue and lingua franca of diverse groups of people spread across nations. Because of its widespread use, the British have, in some sense, lost their exclusivity on English. Or have they? Do the British still own the English language or is this ownership shared with speakers of other varieties of English? If owners of a language are those people for whom the language functions as a native language, then we should conclude that all native speakers of English whether in England, Scotland, India, Singapore or New Zealand own the English language. Thus, we have a large and diverse group of people who can claim ownership of English. And English is not exclusive to any of

those groups as it is used across the world. Consequently, the notion of exclusivity will not take us very far in the case of English.

To refine our definition of linguistic ownership, it is useful to refer to Evans (2002). Evans argues that a language is owned by its native speakers who share certain characteristics and thus, form a well-defined group. Usually, a prototypical native speaker of a language comes from a specific ethnic community which identifies with the language. Also, this group has a strong historical association with the language. Thus, because of their native competence in the language <u>and</u> their historical association with it, they are the owners of the language. So, if we adopt Evans' definition of linguistic ownership, we could argue that the owners of English are the British since they are the native speakers of the language and there is a historical association between the language and the people. Thus, all the other non-British speakers of English can claim ownership of the language on the basis of first-language only. Their association with English is not as historically embedded as that of British people with the language. The following venn diagram illustrates this observation:

Historical Link   Native Speakers
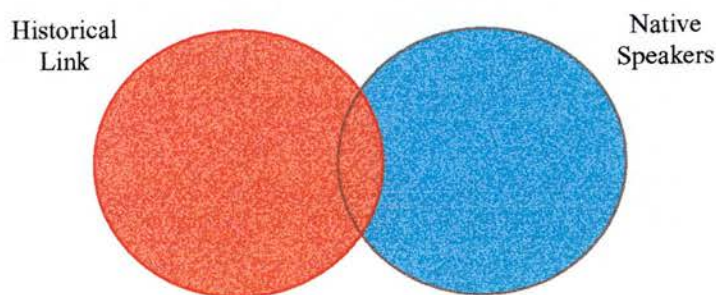
Figure 7.1. Linguistic ownership.

In the above venn diagram, the prototypical owner of a language is one who has both a historical link with the language and is a native speaker of the language. Native speakers who have no historical link with the language can still claim ownership but they cannot be considered prototypical owners of the language. Singaporean, Indian, South African and other non-British native speakers of English would fit in the "Native Speakers" set only. There might also be people who have a historical link with English, but are not native speakers of the language. For instance, the few British who came to Mauritius in the 19th century assimilated into the Franco-Mauritian group. The descendants of these British do not speak English as a native language anymore although they have a historical link with the language (Stein 1997). British native-speakers of English fit in the intersecting part of the diagram (i.e., have a historical link with English and are native speakers of the language) and are thus, prototypical owners of the language. However, Evans herself suggests that the case of English is not so straightforward. Because of its widespread use across continents and by people of various social backgrounds, the language departs from this prototypical model of ownership.

Though these definitions of ownership may be problematic in the case of English, they are less so for indigenous languages. An aboriginal language like Ngarrindjeri unequivocally belongs to the Ngarrindjeri people (Amery 1995). They are the only native speakers of the language and have a strong historical association with the language, which is part of their cultural identity. Thus, they clearly own the language. Even an Indian language like Gujerati which is widely spoken by Gujeratis around the world could be said to belong to native speakers of this language, in

Gujerat and elsewhere. This is so because those people who are native speakers of Gujerati and yet, do not stay in Gujerat, are likely to be of Gujerati origin/ancestry. The Gujerati diaspora can legitimately claim a historical link with Gujerati and if they still use Gujerati as their first language, they can even be considered as prototypical owners of the Gujerati language. Thus, languages like Gujerati, Tamil and Ngarrindjeri can fit into Evans' definition of linguistic ownership more neatly than English because they have not been appropriated by large groups of people of other ethnicities – even though they may have spread across the world through migration. Also, people of Gujerati and Tamil origins can claim exclusivity over Gujerati and Tamil, respectively, in that knowledge of these languages generally tends to be restricted to these specific ethnic/cultural groups around the world[16].

Although some people may have English as their first language, they might not feel any emotional affinity with the language. Canagarajah (2000) discusses how some people from the town of Jaffna in Sri Lanka have adopted English for instrumental purposes while being competent in their cultural language and still identifying strongly with their Sri Lankan culture. His research shows that it is possible for speakers of English not to have any desire to own the language and the culture associated with that language. Competence in English becomes a marketable commodity (Heller 2003, also Chapter 5). Canagarajah argues that by adopting the language of the colonisers, English, some of the people of Jaffna were not in fact endorsing Western values but rather they were only acquiring the language of upward mobility and progress, that is, using it to their advantage. As such, it did not pose any threat to their own indigenous identity. Thus, the people of Jaffna are not

passive users of the language, but are actively involved in changing the meanings attached to the language. Just like Indian and Singaporean native speakers of English, some Sri Lankans could fit in the "Native Speakers" set in Figure 6.1. Therefore, they can be considered as owners of English.

However, it seems that some of the people of Jaffna are more attached to their Sri Lankan language and culture than English. That is, their first allegiance is to their Sri Lankan language. Thus, because of the lack of emotional attachment to English, it is not likely that those people will want to claim <u>ownership</u> of the language. They "claim a <u>knowledge</u> of the language (or grammar) in order to qualify for bureaucratic jobs, while distancing themselves from the texts and values that came with the language" (Canagarajah 2000:124 – my emphasis). Sri Lankans, therefore, do not identify English as their cultural language. The languages that they identify with, i.e., *their* languages, are those that embody their values and traditions. Sri Lankans therefore adopt a "product-oriented, philological approach to English" whereby English is only indexed with socio-economic progress and not Sri Lankan cultural values and identity (Canagarajah 2000: 124). Sri Lankans therefore adopt an "avoidance strategy" (2000: 124) in that they avoid giving English any identificatory meaning. English has solely a utilitarian function.

Furthermore, in this strategy, claiming knowledge differs from claiming ownership. One can claim knowledge without claiming ownership and vice-versa. The group that adopts an avoidance strategy strips English of any affective meaning. It could be argued that in this case where English is only a means of communication devoid of

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any emotional content, there is limited or no emotional attachment between users and the language. Thus, it is unlikely that those users who adopt the avoidance strategy would want to claim ownership of English. In fact, given Sri Lankans' strong attachment to their cultural languages, it is possible that they would claim ownership of these languages rather than English. This case illustrates the point that native competence alone is not a reliable characteristic to assess linguistic ownership. The case of the people of Jaffna suggests that in addition to anything else, to claim ownership of a language, speakers should feel an emotional bond with the variety. Historical links can create this emotional affinity between users and the language although they do not necessarily give rise to this bond. In other words, it is possible for some people to have a historical link with a given language and yet feel no strong bond with the language. In some possible extreme cases, they may even feel resentment for the language and consequently, have no desire to own the language.

On the basis of these observations, I argue that positive emotional attachment with a language is an important criterion for claiming its ownership. That is, speakers' own language ideologies, attitudes and allegiance are vital elements in assessing which group owns which languages. Consequently, our definition of linguistic ownership so far includes the following criteria:

1. native knowledge

2. historical link

3. exclusivity

4. emotional bond

We have discussed the importance of criteria (1), (2) and (3) in the above paragraphs. Although they are important and useful measures of linguistic ownership, they are not sufficient criteria by themselves. Also, in the case of English and other languages with international reach, criteria (1) and (3) tend to be less important. That is, criteria (1) and (3) are neither necessary nor sufficient in these cases. Criterion (4) seems to be crucial in determining linguistic ownership. For people to claim ownership of a language, they must feel a positive emotional bond with the language and they must be willing to make the language theirs. That is, ownership cannot be assigned just on the basis of criteria (1), (2) and (3), but there has to be an active emotional involvement on the part of speakers. In other words, it is fair to say that ownership has to be claimed rather than given. The first three criteria help to legitimate a claim of ownership. That is, speakers meeting all the above criteria are more eligible in claiming ownership of a language than speakers who do not have any or one of the above criteria.

As mentioned in chapters 2 and 5, in multilingual Mauritius, claiming linguistic ownership can be seen as a major socio-political statement. Thus, in this multilingual context, who owns which language is an important question. In the section below, we explore the concept of linguistic ownership using the frameworks discussed above. We analyse the way in which this concept is used and exploited in the local context.

7.3 Linguistic ownership in the Mauritian context

The previous chapters have underlined the fact that in Mauritius, languages are charged with social, cultural, political and economic meaning. Because languages are more than simple tools of communication, it is of crucial sociocultural importance which groups claim ownership of the many varieties spoken on the island. In a country where politicians are generally elected on the basis of their ethnic identity and each ethnic/cultural group is allocated government resources on the basis of their numbers, claiming ownership of a language can even be seen as a political move in certain circumstances (Eriksen 1998, Rajah 2003). That is, a Tamil politician hoping to be elected in a largely Tamil-populated region could emphasise his Tamil ancestry and his attachment to the Tamil language although he might not, in fact, feel any affinity with the culture. That is, he could play the ethnic and linguistic card – claiming membership in the Tamil group in order to secure votes from Tamil voters (also examples in section 2.7.2, Chapter 2). In this scenario, claiming linguistic ownership is an important means of gaining acceptance and votes.

However, linguistic ownership can be claimed for reasons other than these vested interest motives. Some people can claim ownership of, and identify with, a language out of non-political attachment for the language. For instance, the Mauritian Memans form a minority within the Muslim group (Stein 1982). It is unlikely that they will gain any significant economic or political advantage by claiming that Kutchi is their language. However, in the 1983 census, 0.01% of the population claimed that Kutchi was the language of their forefathers, i.e., their language (Stein 1986: 269; we discuss the association between language of forefathers and linguistic ownership in

the paragraphs below). Nominating Kutchi as their language can suggest an attachment to their ancestral lands. By claiming ownership of a language X, a Mauritian claims membership in group X. That is, Kutchi acquires direct and indirect indexical values. It relates to a region in India, which in turn, suggests adherence to particular social and cultural practices. Other Mauritians, especially Muslims who might be aware of those ethnic divisions within their religious community, will also associate Kutchi with Memans. Not only will the Mauritian Memans be associated with the Kutchi language, but they will also be thought of as sharing a specific culture.

To the Mauritian, therefore, the stereotypical speaker of Kutchi is the Indo-Mauritian Muslim originally from Kutch, who lives by certain traditions and values. Consequently, in Mauritius, the Kutchi language and the Kutchi culture can be said to belong to the Memans. Most of the ancestral languages spoken in Mauritius tend to be thought of as belonging and being restricted to specific groups in the same way as Kutchi is. For instance, the Marathi language belongs to the Mauritians of Marathi origin, who also jointly orient to or share Marathi cultural practices. Even the most widely used ancestral language, Bhojpuri, is "ideologically [assigned]" to the "Hindu subgroup of the Indian community" (Eisenlohr 2004: 60). In the case of these ancestral languages, it is fairly straightforward to claim and assign linguistic ownership. Ownership is claimed and assigned not on the basis of native language since many of the ancestral languages are hardly spoken, but on historical link and emotional bond.

Through the electoral system, and also the census, the Government encourage the division of the population along linguistic (hence, ethnic) lines. In the census, respondents' ethnicity can be deduced from their religion, (possibly) their names and also the language of their forefathers (Dinan 2002). In fact, the language of forefathers was meant to help assign informants to a given ethnic group. From 1952 onwards, information has been gathered about the languages usually spoken in Mauritian homes and also, the ancestral languages of the population. According to Dinan (2002: 70), in "their answers to the questions of the census, Mauritians linked their religious identity and their ancestral languages. They wanted to be recognised within their specific groups". In the census, therefore, ancestral languages serve as a direct index of ethnic identity. As Eriksen (1998: 77) points out, "statements about ancestral languages are to be understood as statements about ethnic membership".

In the Mauritian context, by claiming that their ancestral language is X, for instance, people are not necessarily claiming that they speak language X but rather, they are claiming a (historical) link with that language. If X was not still important to them, they might not have stated that it was their ancestral language. Thus, there is an emotional attachment between the people and language X. The case of Arabic, mentioned in Chapter 2, is interesting and shows how linguistic and social identities are manipulated in the local context. From a historical perspective, no group on the island has Arabic as an ancestral language. Yet, in the 1983 and 2000 Population Census, 7.04% and 0.07% of the population nominated Arabic as the language of their forefathers, respectively (Stein 1986:269, Rajah-Carrim 2003: 68). In earlier 20th century censuses, Arabic was never mentioned as an ancestral language[17]. This language is an index of Islamic identity while Urdu can be considered an index of

Indo-Islamic identity (Rajah-Carrim 2004b). Language, therefore, enables these Mauritians to renegotiate their identity: they foreground their Islamic identity and background their actual Indian origins. The relationship between language of forefathers and ethnicity is clearly brought out in the 2000 Population Census. The question relating to language of forefathers is headed by the title *Linguistic Group*. This term underlines the identificatory role of language. Indeed, given the strong link between linguistic group and ethnic/cultural group, the assignment of respondents to specific linguistic groups is in fact another means of finding out about their ethnicity.

An analysis of the language tables of the 2000 population census reveals that many Mauritians still identify with Asian languages. Given that Mauritians use languages as a means to construct and/or assert their ethnic identity, the relatively substantial presence of Indian languages (47%) in Table 7.1 below is noteworthy. It is clear from the census reports that many Indo-and Sino-Mauritians generally see their history, at least their linguistic history, in terms of their Asian heritage. That is, many Indo-and Sino-Mauritians still strongly identify with Asian culture and languages. This historical link and emotional attachment give them the right to claim X as their language. Thus, in the Mauritian context, Hindi is still the language of Indo-Mauritian Hindus (Eisenlohr 2004), Chinese languages are the languages of Sino-Mauritians and Urdu is associated with Mauritian Muslims (Rajah-Carrim 2003). The census tables show cases where linguistic ownership and membership to a linguistic group are actively claimed. These observations raise some interesting issues regarding group allegiance and linguistic ownership. As Eriksen (1998) asks: after how many generations does a group change its allegiance to a given ancestral language? Or, "when will the Indo-Mauritian population identify itself more strongly

with a Mauritian culture and history than with an Indian one" (Rajah-Carrim 2003: 70)?

Languages	Number of Mauritians	%
Arabic	798	0.07
Bhojpuri	361 184	31.60
Chinese languages	22 606	1.98
Creole	420 344	36.78
English	1073	0.09
French	21 090	1.85
Hindi	35 757	3.13
Marathi	16 587	1.45
Tamil	44 724	3.91
Telugu	18 793	1.64
Urdu	34 096	2.98
Other and not stated	166 017	14.52
Total	1 143 069	100

Table 7.1. Population by language of forefathers (Rajah-Carrim 2003: 68)
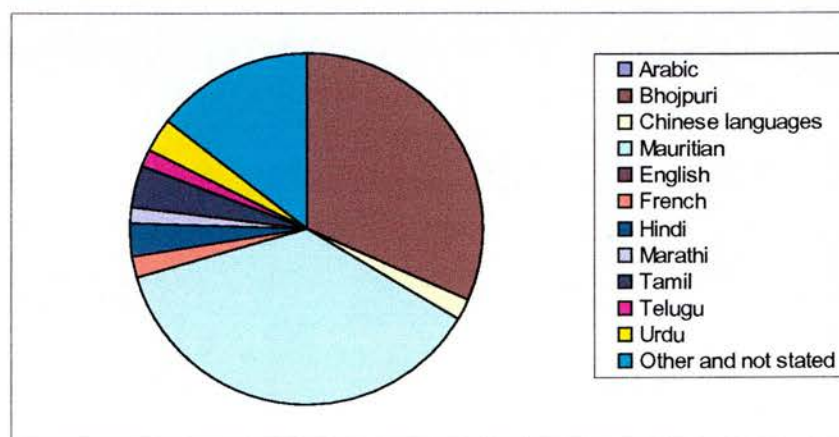
Figure 7.2. Pie chart showing population by language of forefathers.

The above paragraphs show that in Mauritius, linguistic ownership is not necessarily claimed on the basis of native competence in the language, but more on the basis of historical and emotional links. It is clear that most of the ancestral languages quoted above are not often spoken. The census results for languages usually spoken at home reveal that the ancestral languages are commonly used in the home domain by less than 15% of the population – this percentage includes Bhojpuri which is spoken at home by 12% of the population (Rajah-Carrim 2003). Thus, many of the languages in Table 7.1 have more of a symbolic status than a functional one. In some cases, therefore, choosing one language as an ancestral language at the expense of another, Mauritian for instance, can be seen as a political statement and not simply a report of ancestral origins. The case of Asian languages in Mauritius, therefore, further supports the hypothesis that "emotional bond" is an important criterion in assessing who owns which languages.

Moreover, 0.09% and 1.85% of the population state that English and French, respectively, are the languages of *their* forefathers. Since French is associated with the Franco-Mauritians (Baggioni & Robillard 1990, Eriksen 1998), it is likely that most of the people who claim French as the language of their forefathers are from the Franco-Mauritian group. We might also expect members of the Coloured Population who have merged into the Franco-Mauritian group, or who aspire to do so, to have reported French as their ancestral language. The small percentage of people who reported English as their ancestral language is to be expected. First, relatively few British people settled in Mauritius (Toussaint 1972). In addition, most of the British who stayed on the island assimilated to the French culture and way of life (Beaton

1859, Stein 1982). It can hence be said that the percentages who claim membership in the French and English linguistic groups tally well with expectations and historical reports.

The Coloured Population present an interesting phenomenon. As mentioned in Chapter 2, some members of the Coloured Population have Mauritian as their ancestral language although they declare that French fulfils that function. But by stating French as their ancestral language, they are presumably claiming membership in the Franco-Mauritian group. Thus, language or the fact that they belong to the French ethnolinguistic group enables some members of the Coloured Population to distance themselves from the Creole group and (successfully or unsuccessfully) merge into the Franco-Mauritian one. These members of the Coloured Population will hence say that French is their language and Mauritian is not their language.

The case of Asian languages and that of French show different approaches to linguistic ownership in the Mauritian context. However, they both highlight the importance of (real, imagined or forced) emotional attachment in the linguistic ownership matrix. In the case of the Coloured Population, attachment to a language has instrumental functions: it is a means of moving up the social ladder and merging into a prestigious sociocultural group. Although some Coloured People might claim membership in the French-speaking group, they may be denied this membership by members of the prestige group (for the very reason that they do not have any historical link with the language). Thus, from some of the Coloured People's own perspective, they own the French language; but this view might not be shared by other Coloured People or other Mauritians. The general view would be that French is

owned by the Franco-Mauritians only, i.e., those people who not only speak French as their first language but also have a historical link with the language.

The paragraphs above show that in the case of ancestral languages in the Mauritian context, native competence in the languages is not a relevant criterion for assessing linguistic ownership. Historical bond, degree of exclusivity (with respect to other ethnic/religious groups in the local context) and above all, emotional attachment are cited as factors in assigning and claiming ownership of ancestral languages. If it is relatively straightforward to assess who owns which ancestral and European language in Mauritius, the situation is less simple for Mauritian. In the section below, we discuss the ownership of Mauritian in the light of interviewees' comments, the situation as reflected in daily linguistic routines on the island and also available literature. The whole issue will be analysed with reference to the arguments quoted and developed above.

7.4 Ownership of Mauritian

The previous chapters in this dissertation throw light on the linguistic situation of the island. Even though it is commonly said that there are twelve or more languages spoken in Mauritius, it is clear that most of these languages, if still used on the island, are spoken by a minority of Mauritians. Bhojpuri is the only ancestral language that is still spoken at home by an important number of Mauritians. Compared to the other languages, French is in a healthy position: it is widely spoken and also extensively used in written interactions. It even fares better than the official language, English. But Mauritian is, by far, the healthiest spoken language on the island and as Chapter 4 shows, it is also gaining grounds as a written language. So,

unlike most of the other languages present on the island, Mauritian is in a secure position and it even seems to be strengthening this position with respect to the other varieties. But Mauritian differs from the other languages in the sense that its ownership is not clearly defined. In the paragraphs below, we discuss the situation of Mauritian with respect to each of the criteria put forward in section 7.2, i.e., first language, historical bond, exclusivity and emotional attachment.

7.4.1 Native speaker

As we have seen in Chapter 2, Mauritian is the first language of most Mauritians. In the 2000 census, 69% of the population claim that they speak Mauritian at home, i.e., as a first language (Rajah-Carrim 2003). However, even though the number of Mauritians who report using Mauritian at home is high, it is still not an accurate representation of the number of native speakers of the language. It has been observed by linguists and some members of the general public that around 80% of the children who join nursery school have mostly been exposed to Mauritian (Ah Vee 2001, Virahsawmy 2002). This implies that in more than three-quarters of Mauritian homes, Mauritian is the language most often spoken or the first language. The reported 69% of the census is, therefore, an underestimation of the actual extensive use of Mauritian in the home. This important degree of under-reporting of use of Mauritian could be due to the low prestige associated with the language (Chapter 2). The most important point here is that Mauritian is undoubtedly the most common native language on the island. It is followed by Bhojpuri (12.5%), French (3.4%) and Chinese languages (0.6%). As can be seen from the percentages for Bhojpuri, French and Chinese languages, the other native languages cannot compete with Mauritian.

But who are the speakers of Mauritian? Are they part of one ethnic group, religion or social class?

Since the census tables do not give information about the ethnic group of the population, we have to infer the identity of the native speakers of Mauritian from other recorded data. First, no ethnic/religious group on the island make up more than 52% of the population (Chapter 2). This suggests that those people who claim that Mauritian is their native language must be from at least two ethnic groups. For instance, the native speakers of Mauritian could regroup all Hindus (52% of the total population) and Muslims (17% of the total population) only. However, they could also be made up of all members of the General Population (30% of the total population), some Hindus (e.g., 30% of the Mauritian population) and some Muslims (9%), or some Hindus, Muslims, Sino-Mauritians and a few members of the General Population. Thus, we cannot come to any conclusion as to the ethnic and religious identity of native speakers of Mauritian on the basis of these figures alone.

The data on "language of forefathers" can give us some indication regarding the ethnic and religious identities of the native speakers of Mauritian. In one of the census tables (partly reproduced below; Rajah-Carrim (2003) reproduces and discusses the complete table), the Mauritian population is regrouped by language of forefathers and language usually spoken. This table can shed some light on the identity of the native speakers of Mauritian.

Language	Language of forefathers	Mauritian at home
Arabic	798	636
Bhojpuri	361,184	187,074
Chinese languages	22,606	11,005
Creole	420,344	389,523
English	1,073	88
French	21,090	1,437
Hindi	35,757	20,945
Marathi	16,587	12,778
Tamil	44,724	36,639
Telugu	18,793	13,170
Urdu	34,096	29,325
Other and not stated	166,017	88,845
Total	1,143,069	791,465

Table 7.2 Speakers of Mauritian at home by language of forefathers (Rajah-Carrim 2003: 71)

Table 7.2 shows that the 791 465 native speakers of Mauritian come from a variety of linguistic groups and consequently, what would in Mauritius be considered different ethnic and religious groups (informants are assigned to *linguistic group*s on the basis of their ancestral language. As discussed, the linguistic group is a useful and fairly reliable way of assessing the ethnic and/or religious group of an individual). For instance, of the 798 Mauritians who claim that Arabic is their ancestral language, all of whom can reasonably be assumed to be Muslims, 636 said that Mauritian was the language usually spoken in their homes (Rajah-Carrim 2003: 71). Table 7.2 also shows that almost half of the people who have Chinese varieties as their ancestral languages, i.e., Sino-Mauritians, mainly use Mauritian in their homes. Thus, it can be said that the people who usually speak Mauritian at home

include Sino-Mauritians, Hindus, Marathis, Tamils, Telugus, Muslims, Franco-Mauritians and Creoles.

Furthermore, 92.7% of the people who report Mauritian as their ancestral language use it in their home. The remaining 7.3% use French, English or Bhojpuri at home. Also, in cases where Asian languages are reported as ancestral languages, Mauritian generally turns out to be the language usually spoken at home. In these cases, therefore, Asian languages do not function as media of communication in daily routines (function served by Mauritian) but as important indexes of ethnic identity. Asian languages are used in a limited number of households with each of these households speaking mostly its own reported ancestral Asian language. For instance, the few people who use Urdu at home are mostly those who have also claimed Urdu as their ancestral language. The same observation applies for Hindi, Telugu, Tamil and Marathi (Rajah-Carrim 2003). Overall, Asian languages, with the exception of Bhojpuri, are used by only a small number of people at home. Mauritian seems to have taken over the role of these languages as the language usually spoken at home to such an extent that the latter are now restricted to religious and/or cultural domains.

Through official data, we have established that the native speakers of Mauritian come from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, i.e., they form a fairly disparate sociocultural group. For want of data, it is not possible to assess the social class of those native speakers. Participant observation and the literature confirm that Mauritian is the first language of most Mauritians, irrespective of their ethnicity and religion (e.g., Stein 1982, Foley 1992, Eriksen 1998, Bissoonauth & Offord 2001).

There is one factor that all native speakers of Mauritians clearly share: their nationality. Indeed, all the native speakers reported in the census are Mauritians. Therefore, with respect to the first criterion for linguistic ownership, it might be more accurate to say that the language belongs to Mauritians as a nation, rather than any specific linguistic group since Mauritians from all ancestral language backgrounds use Mauritian for daily interactions in the home. In order to refine our description of the owner of Mauritian, we turn to the other criteria mentioned in section 7.2.

7.4.2 Historical link

Owners of a language share a special historical bond with the language (Evans 2002). Thus, they are historically associated with the language. We have discussed the issue of historical association with respect to English and in the Mauritian context, the ancestral languages. For instance, in Mauritius, it is unlikely that people of non-Marathi origins will claim ownership of Marathi. It is clear that the language belongs to those Mauritians of Marathi origins. This argument is not based on the fact that those Mauritians use Marathi as their first language, but on the fact that they are historically and for that matter, socioculturally, associated with the language. This shows that historical association is an important criterion for claiming and assigning linguistic ownership. But as far as Mauritian is concerned, who are the people who are historically associated with the language and therefore, who could claim its ownership on the basis of this historical relationship? In other words, for which group is Mauritian an ancestral language?

First, compared to the other languages present on the island, Mauritian is a relatively young language. Its presence can be dated back to the early 18th century. Like many

other creoles, Mauritian has emerged out of plantation slaveries (Baker & Corne 1986). At the beginning of the French era, Mauritius was peopled mainly by slaves and a few French masters. Thus, the first speakers of Mauritian were the slaves and their French masters. Mauritian, therefore, came to symbolise the ideology of slavery (Moutou 1996). During the French period, craftsmen and merchants came from India. Both groups were free people. While the Indian craftsmen culturally and religiously merged into the General Population, the merchants managed to keep their ethnic, religious and even, linguistic identities. With the presence of the free Indians, therefore, it is likely that the role of Mauritian as a lingua franca was reinforced. Mauritian enabled French masters to address their slaves and also, Indians artisans and traders to address their French clients.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the slaves could not use and retain their African languages because they were dispersed from their groups. Thus, they could not pass on their own language to their offspring, who instead acquired Mauritian. This situation can be contrasted to that of the French and the Indian merchants, for instance. The French colonisers actively used their language with their children and compatriots. In the same way, the Indian traders used their Indian language at home and with their fellow citizens. It is very likely that they switched to Mauritian in interactions with those who could not understand their Indian language(s). Therefore, compared to the free workers and traders and the French masters, the African slaves were at a cultural, religious and linguistic loss. They were deprived of their cultural, religious and linguistic traditions and forced to assimilate to the culture and religion that were presented to, or rather imposed on, them (Moutou 1996). Because of this deculturation, depersonalisation and assimilation process, descendants of slaves do

not have much information regarding their ancestral culture, traditions and language[18]. During the French era, Mauritian not only became the native language of the children of African slaves but it also served as a lingua franca (Moutou 1996). French and some Indian languages were also spoken on the island.

When the British took over the island in 1810, English became part of the national linguistic landscape although it has never managed to replace French. The arrival of Indian indentured labourers brought major changes in the linguistic situation of the island. Because the labourers were allowed to keep their cultures, religions and languages (Chapter 2), the Indian languages were widely used across the island. These languages were used in the home and even, taught in religious schools. Like the indentured labourers, Chinese traders who came as free immigrants at that time managed to preserve and transmit their cultures and languages. However, as noted in Chapter 2 and the sections above, these Asian languages, with the exception of Bhojpuri, are not widely spoken anymore. Indeed, Mauritian has become the native language of many Sino- and Indo-Mauritians, only one or two centuries after it had become that of descendants of slaves. Nevertheless, through the (symbolic and cultural) preservation of ancestral languages, it is still possible for Indo-Mauritians to relate to their cultural and linguistic heritage (Rajah-Carrim 2004a).

On the basis of the above paragraphs, it could be argued that the first inhabitants of *Ile de France* are those who share the oldest relationship with the language. Although the French masters also used Mauritian in their interactions with their workers, they maintained their French language in the home. Thus, their link to Mauritian developed out of a need to communicate with slaves. Mauritian was a

communicative bridge between master and slave. But Mauritian was also used as a lingua franca by other immigrant groups and in time, this lingua franca turned into the native language of these groups too. Thus, Mauritian can be historically linked to all the ethnic groups present during the French and British eras as it is most likely that it was used by each of them – whether as a lingua franca or a native language.

But not only did the slaves use Mauritian in interactions with their superiors, but also within their intimate circles. It could therefore be argued that those slaves for whom Mauritian became a means of communication within their families developed a more profound relationship than their masters with the language. By becoming the means with which the slaves communicated with their offspring, Mauritian acquired affective meaning for the slaves. Consequently, the strongest or oldest historical link is with the first slaves at the very beginning of French colonisation. The descendants of these slaves for whom Mauritian became a socially enriched medium of communication are now part of the General Population which comprise Afro- and Franco-Mauritians and also, members of the Coloured Population.

Given the short history of Mauritian, it is fair to say that all those immigrants who came to Mauritius and started using the language have a historical bond with the language. However, the strength of this link varies depending on the length of contact with, and use of, the language and also, the nature of this contact. The discussion above suggests that on wholly historical grounds, the most legitimate owners of Mauritian are the descendants of African slaves. However, historical link is not a sufficient criterion for assigning linguistic ownership. We need to take other criteria into account. In the section below, we discuss ownership of Mauritian with

regards to the "exclusivity" criterion and analyse how together with the first two criteria, "exclusivity" helps us define who owns Mauritian.

7.4.3 Exclusivity

Exclusivity in this context is understood as the association of a language with a specific group only. This group could be defined in terms of a variety of features, e.g., ethnicity, religion, gender, social class, place of residence. In the Mauritian context, for instance, the Tamil language is an index of Tamil ethnicity. The ancestors of the Mauritian Tamils came from the same region in India and thus, shared the same culture, traditions, religion and language. Although the descendants have moved away from the ancestral land, they still identify with the ancestral language (as evidenced by census figures) and consequently, the ancestral cultural traditions and values. Also, this affinity with Tamil culture unites Mauritians of Tamil ancestry and differentiates them from the other groups on the island who can be defined in terms of other ancestral cultures and languages. In the Mauritian context, therefore, the Tamil culture and language is associated only with those people of Tamil origin. And in some sense, this exclusivity gives the Tamils a legitimate right to claim ownership of the Tamil culture and language in the local context. Through this indexical link, the Mauritian Tamils can also identify with other Tamils in India and around the world.

The above example shows that exclusivity is not independent of having a "historical link". That is, the Tamils have exclusive rights over Tamil because of their historical association with the Tamil culture. Therefore, there must be one or more factors that render the exclusivity criterion valid. In other words, the notion of exclusivity cannot

exist by itself. For instance, a group can gain exclusive rights over a language through its historical bond with the language, as in the example presented above, or through power. In colonial societies, for example, the colonial powers imposed *their* language on the people and in some cases (e.g., Mauritius), even banned the language of the people in some domains like schooling or the judiciary. While the dominated groups learnt the language of the dominant group, they did not have any rights over the language. That is, knowing the language of the colonisers and even using it as a native language did not necessarily make the language theirs. The colonisers still owned the language and in some sense, their rights over the language were reserved (Phillipson 1992).

The above scenario suggests that the colonisers who are the original native speakers of the language have more claims over the language than the colonised group. Thus, it is the former group who will set the norms for teaching and learning their language (e.g., Bamgbose 1998). Indeed, in British colonies, native speakers of the language from England were brought in as English language teachers, thus underlining the power of the British over the language. According to Phillipson (2000: 98),

> [the] terms themselves – native/non-native – are offensive and hierarchical in that they take the native as the norm, and define the Other negatively in relation to this norm. Thus are hierarchies internalized subconsciously and serve hegemonic purposes.

The British were seen as setting the norm for the language. In other words, the norms come from those who are in power. In some parts of the world today, local and non-native, i.e., non-British/non-American, standards are increasingly used in "defining the forms and functions of the English language" (Matsuda 2003: 483). However, in countries like Japan, British standards still serve as local norms

(Matsuda 2003). For instance, while the Japanese respondents in Matsuda's study "agreed that English was being used internationally, their perspectives on other issues related to English suggested that students did not believe that English belonged internationally – certainly not to them" (2003: 487). The owners of the language were British and North Americans. American English and British English were seen as the standard varieties. English, therefore, is the language of the British and Americans who are seen as speaking the best form of the language. It could be argued that because of the correctness of their speech, they are seen as the norm-setters for the English language. In a way, therefore, the group who sets the norms for the language or who is looked up to for the norms has a special right over the language.

Therefore, exclusive or additional rights over a language can be gained through a variety of factors. But who are those people who have additional rights to make an exclusive claim over the Mauritian language? Does one group have an advantage over others in this domain? In order to answer these questions, we have to consider the issues raised in the previous two sections. First, Mauritian appears to be the native language of most Mauritians, irrespective of their ethnic or religious group, social class and age-group. Thus, it could be said that no group could claim additional rights on the language on the basis of native competence. But although Mauritian has become the first language of most Mauritians, at the beginning of its history, its use as a first language seemed to be limited to children of slaves. That is, it was first of all the first language of the Afro-Mauritians before it became that of Indo-, Sino- and even, Franco-Mauritians. If this is a criterion to go by, then it seems that the Afro-Mauritians have additional, though not exclusive, rights over the

language. They do not have exclusive rights over Mauritian because the language is widely spoken by Mauritians in daily interactions whether at home, with friends or in less intimate circles. In that sense then, we cannot say that Mauritian belongs to Afro-Mauritians only. However, we could argue that there is an added depth to their identification with Mauritian because of their historical link with the language.

Furthermore, we have seen that the fact that British are seen as setting or being the norms for the English language gives them some exclusive rights to claim ownership of the language. But in the case of Mauritian, who sets the norms? Who are those who speak the purest forms of the language? Even though Mauritian is not a standardised language (or a language with no widely recognised standard), there are some general views as to what counts as "correct", "pure" and "authentic" Mauritian (chapters 4 and 6). Even in writing, the preferred orthography among interviewees is the one that emphasises the creoleness of the language. It appears that those who speak the purest form of Mauritian are the inhabitants of Black River who are mostly or stereotypically thought to be Creoles. Some of the interviewees look up to the Creoles who are believed to speak a variety of Mauritian that is least influenced by other languages. If norm-setters are those who speak or are thought to speak the purest or best forms of the language, then the Creoles have to be those who establish the rules of Mauritian. In some sense then, because of the purity of their speech, Creoles have the authority to modify the standards of the language. Hence, they could be in a situation where they are the only ones who have the power to interfere with the language. For instance, they could be the ones who have the control over the spelling system or the introduction of new recognised vocabulary. Chapter 6 briefly discusses how the notion of linguistic purity and its association with Creoles in the

Mauritian context can have repercussions on the standardisation of the language. It suffices to say here that if Creoles are seen as speaking the best form of Mauritian and consequently, the form that could serve as the standard, then they enjoy some privileges over the language that no other group does. They can prescribe linguistic usage. That is, unlike other groups on the island, Creoles have some special rights over the language. From this perspective, therefore, the Creoles can be said to own Mauritian.

So far, we have seen that some groups can claim exclusive rights over Mauritian but only with respect to certain factors or domains. Mauritian therefore differs from most of the other ancestral languages present in Mauritius. In the section below, we discuss the importance of emotional attachment in the claim for ownership of Mauritian.

7.4.4 Emotional attachment

The question of emotional attachment with respect to the Mauritian language is complex. We have seen that in the case of ancestral languages, the issue is clear-cut. Mauritians who share a historical and/or cultural bond with the ancestral languages are usually those who show an emotional attachment to the varieties and claim, and are assigned, their ownership in the local context. In these cases, this attachment stems from historical links rather than competence in the language. But who are those who are emotionally attached to Mauritian? Does this attachment give them additional rights over the language? And, what are the reasons for this attachment?

Unlike most ancestral languages, Mauritian is a supra-ethnic variety (Stein 1982) and also the native language of the majority of Mauritians. Although not officially proclaimed as a national language, it is widely used by Mauritians, as evidenced by responses in this dissertation. In fact, interviewees suggest that all Mauritians know the language even if they do not all use it at home. Part of being Mauritian means speaking Mauritian. Thus, it is very unlikely to find a person born and bred on the island who cannot speak Mauritian. It is clear that Mauritian is a common language on the island in that it is known, if not spoken at home, by all Mauritians, irrespective of their ethnicity, religion, social class, place of residence, gender and age-group. However, as we have seen above, the Afro-Mauritians seem to have a special relationship with Mauritian in that they are seen as speaking the purest form of the language and also, their ancestors were its first native speakers. This special relationship can lead them to identify and be identified with Mauritian more strongly than other groups.

Moreover, unlike other ethnic groups on the island, the Afro-Mauritians (and also, those members of the Coloured Population who do not aspire to French culture) do not have a "foreign ancestral language" that they can identify with. That is, they do not have any emotional bond with a foreign land, language and culture. In the 1983 census, the African languages, Bambara and Malgache, were mentioned as ancestral languages by 0.01% of the population (Stein 1986: 270). Since that time, there seems to have been a cultural awakening of the Creole population:

> That Bambara and Malgache were given, although not often, shows that the descendants of the slaves are beginning to develop an interest in their origin and their cultural and linguistic heritage. This is the first expression of a new consciousness that they do have a history and a traditional heritage; the Indian

population groups in Mauritius were able to maintain this consciousness from the very start.

Stein (1986: 273)

Indeed, many Creoles now take pride in their African identity and attempt to assert their Africanness through, for instance, music (séga) and clothing (rasta style) (*Week-end* 1 March 1998). This cultural upsurge helps in boosting the self-esteem of this socially and economically deprived group (Father Cerveaux, personal communication, interview in 2003; also Violette 1998, Dinan 2002). However, it is a fact that the descendants of slaves have been deprived of their ancestral culture and language. In some sense then, they are culturally "naked", like the Trinidadians of African descent discussed by Munasinghe (1997). Compared to other ethnic groups, it could be said that they are culturally disadvantaged in that they do not have an old foreign culture to identify with. Their cord with that foreign culture has been severed at the time of slavery. In a newspaper interview in 1998, the Mauritian sociologist Oodiah sums up the local Creoles' situation as such[19]:

> There are (...) historical reasons why the Creole group is most vulnerable. [They are] a group that faces serious socio-economic problems, many prejudices and stereotypes, and an absence of cultural reference points because of slavery, which was a real (...) "cultural genocide".
>
> (*Week-end*, 1 March 1998: 45)

Because of the absence of any solid reference to African culture, the Creoles have had to develop new cultural and linguistic markers. In the Mauritian context, it is of crucial importance for every ethnic group to have at least one ancestral language (Chapter 2). One of the ways of creating a linguistic marker of identity is to appropriate a language and turn it into their ancestral language. A look at the languages present in Mauritius suggests that there are few languages that Creoles could claim as theirs. They cannot claim that Asian languages are theirs because

there are already some groups that identify with these in-group languages and they have no historical link with these languages. Although French is an out-group language, it is largely seen as the language of the Franco-Mauritians. As far as English is concerned, although it is thought to be ethnically and culturally neutral in the local context (Eriksen 1998), it is hardly spoken. This leaves us with Mauritian. Creoles, like other Mauritians, are fully competent in the language. Since Mauritian is a local creole, it is not attached to any foreign land. As such, it is devoid of any ancestral or ethnic connotations. It is therefore the most suitable language for Creoles to adopt as their ancestral language. Also, it is the variety that their ancestors adopted and developed at the time when it was only a new language with few native speakers. By adopting Mauritian as their ancestral language, Creoles add an ethnic dimension to this potentially neutral language.

The census figures are interesting in that they show that more than a third of the Mauritian population identify with the *Creole linguistic group*. But, who are those who state Mauritian as their ancestral language? On the basis of the above observations, we would expect only the Creoles and some Mulattos to report Mauritian as their ancestral language, Indo-and Sino-Mauritians to report Asian languages and Franco-Mauritians to claim French as their ancestral language. The Creoles and the Coloured Population make up less than 30% of the total population. Yet, 36.8% of the population claim that Creole is their ancestral language. Mauritians, other than Creoles and Mulattos, have therefore also reported Creole as their ancestral language. Thus, an important proportion of the population identify with Mauritian. It appears that the variety has been embraced as an ancestral language on a par with the Asian and European languages. By designating those who

state Mauritian as their ancestral language as part of the *Creole linguistic group*, the census adds an ethnic tinge to the language. That is, the language becomes a marker of a religious, ethnic or social group, just like the other languages reported in the census tables. Do those people who identify Mauritian as their ancestral language show greater emotional attachment to the language?

There are no straightforward measurements of emotional attachment. In fact, emotional attachment is a subjective and elusive concept. However, people's language use and attitudes can reveal the kind of relationship that they hold with the language. That is, what people say about certain languages, and how, when and with whom they use these languages can act as rough indications of their attachment to the languages. For instance, in the multilingual Mauritian context, people have the possibility of choosing an ancestral language from a cohort of twelve languages. The choice can therefore be said to be potentially loaded with significance in that choosing one language over another not only means favouring one linguistic group over another, but also preferring one culture over another. It suggests identification with a specific group. Thus, I would argue that reports of ancestral languages can also be taken to show emotional attachment to given languages.

While reports of ancestral languages suggest a connection with a cultural past, those of language usually spoken at home suggest an attachment with the present. It has been pointed out that census figures have to be interpreted with caution because informants sometimes do not report actual language use (Stein 1986, Crowley 1994). People change their linguistic reality for specific purposes, e.g., to show use of a

prestigious variety, to assert their identity, to underline their attachment to a given language. Given that it is unlikely for informants to report using a language that they despise or are completely detached from, responses for *language usually spoken at home* in the 2000 census can also reveal an emotional link with certain languages (cf. Telugu example in Chapter 2).

From the census figures, we can see that Mauritian fares well compared to other languages. It is the ancestral language and the first language of 36% and 69% of the population, respectively. That such significant proportions of the population claim Mauritian as their ancestral and first language underlines the importance of this language for the population. The correspondence between Mauritian as an ancestral language and Mauritian as the language of the home suggests that a large section of the population is attached to the language, either through ancestral links or through daily needs. Even though Creoles seem to be those who have or report having the strongest historical link with Mauritian, reports of first language suggest that members of other ethnic groups also currently use the language in their home (section 7.4.1). From this perspective, it seems that almost 70% of the nation is attached to the language (it could be said that the remaining 10% who use Mauritian at home but report another variety as their language do not show any attachment to the language. They prefer stating other varieties as their first language). Not only do 70% of Mauritians actively use Mauritian but they also clearly report doing so; hence it could be said that there is a bond between them and the language. And on the basis of this attachment to the language, those people could claim and/or be assigned ownership of Mauritian.

At this stage, the "emotional attachment" leads us to conclude that almost three quarters of the Mauritian population own Mauritian - and not just the Creoles who are the ones with the strongest historical link with the language. To refine our description of the owner of Mauritian, it is useful to analyse individual Mauritians' views on the issue. So far, we have analysed emotional attachment with reference to findings in a major national survey. In the fieldwork, interviewees also reported their feelings towards Mauritian. The interviews provide independent and detailed information relevant to the question of ownership of Mauritian.

7.5 Interviews

Respondents were asked whether they thought that Mauritian was an ethnic or a national language. All my informants stated that Mauritian is a national language. In asserting that it is a language that belongs to the whole nation, they are avoiding, in some sense, assigning Mauritian to any particular ethnic, social or religious group(s). Instead, this response constructs Mauritian as a unifying national element that binds members of different groups together. On the basis of these responses, it could be argued that all Mauritians can claim ownership of the language.

Furthermore, interviews conducted in 2002 and 2003 show that most interviewees are attached to Mauritian. They argue that the language has an important role in their daily lives. Most of the interviewees believe that it would be impossible to live in Mauritius and yet, not know Mauritian. However, some of them added that certain Mauritians pretend not to know Mauritian because they think that it is a low

language. They prefer using the languages of upward social mobility. These people who pretend not to know Mauritian are unlikely to have any emotional attachment to the language. They want to distance themselves from the language and hence, from the people who speak and identify with the language.

It is interesting that some respondents argue that although Mauritian is now the language of the whole nation, it started off as the language of the slaves. For example:

Ex 7.1 Ti lang esklav avan, aster li lang tou morisien (Jayen, 20-39, IMH)
It was the language of the slaves before, now it's the language of all Mauritians.

Ex 7.2 Tou morisien koz kreol aster, avan ti lang ban Morisien d'origin l'Afrik (Ram, 40-59, IMH)
All Mauritians speak Creole nowadays, previously it was the language of Mauritians of African origins.

The historical link between Afro-Mauritians, i.e., Creoles, and Mauritian is underlined in these responses. By highlighting the relationship between slavery and Mauritian, are the respondents in some sense giving more rights over the language to the descendants of slaves than other ethnic groups? Most of these respondents make it clear that Mauritian has transcended ethnic barriers and now clearly functions as a national language. However, in some interviews, we also have those responses that emphasise the link between Creoles and the "national language" Mauritian. For example, Raymond (40-59, FM) argues that the promotion of Mauritian as a written language and to official status would be "good" if it helps to "revalorise the Creole" (*ce serait bon si ça aide à revaloriser le Créole*). In his response, Raymond highlights the indexical relationship between the language and the ethnic group Creoles. It seems that from his ideological perspective, Mauritian is primarily the

language of the Creoles. Thus, enhancing the status of the language means enhancing the status of the group that the language is associated with, the Creoles. Throughout his interview, Raymond emphasises the link between Mauritian and Creoles, thereby giving the impression that Mauritian is an ethnic rather than a national language, as suggested by other interviewees. Indeed, Raymond believes that "true" Mauritian is spoken by Creoles and it is a variety that he cannot speak himself (e.g., part of *ex 6.5*, Chapter 6). It could be that he looks up to the Creoles for their way of speaking Mauritian.

If we adopt the stand-point that the "purest", "best" or "truest" forms of a language are spoken by the owners of the language (as in section 7.4.3), then we could claim that the owners of Mauritian are the Creoles. The discussion in the previous chapter shows that the purest forms of Mauritian tend to be associated with those regions where there are large Creole populations. Of course, Creoles are not the only native speakers of Mauritian. Yet, Chapter 6 shows that of all the native speakers of Mauritian, Creoles are generally thought to speak the purest form of Mauritian. Their variety is celebrated for its authenticity and purity; and it is a form that some people believe has to be emulated (Raymond's response). The authenticity and purity of the Creoles' variety of Mauritian could be related to the historical link between Creoles and Mauritian. True Mauritian is the variety that shows maximal deviation from French. Historically, the emergence of Mauritian goes along with the (French) master and (African) slave opposition. From the very beginning of settlement in Mauritius, therefore, Mauritian came to characterise the opposition between French and African origins. It was a language that diverged from French. The ancestors of the Creoles,

therefore, spoke a language that differed from French. If we say that purity is measured in terms of divergence from French, then in some ways, we index purity of the language with the ancestors of the Creoles. Also, because the Creoles have no ancestral languages to borrow from (section 7.4.3), they get constructed as the true speakers of the language. Through different language ideologies, therefore, the indexical relationship between purity of Mauritian and Creole ethnicity gets reconstructed and reinforced.

A parallel can here be drawn with English. We have seen that British and Americans are often seen as the norm-setters for English (e.g., Matsuda (2003) cited above). They control the language and their variety is the one that has to be acquired by other speakers or learners of English. Taking this argument further, we could argue that because the British *control* English, they have additional rights over the language – unlike other native speakers of the language. This control is consciously or unconsciously acknowledged by other speakers or learners of English. That is, speaking good English means speaking English as the British do[20].

The Creoles' "better" or "purer" knowledge of the Mauritian language is acknowledged in this corpus. In some sense then, they are believed to have a better mastery of the language. And, because they have a better mastery of the language, they are in a situation of power compared to the other groups of native speakers who do not speak the purest forms of the language, as evidenced by the comments in Chapter 6. It could therefore be argued that this additional power gives them more control and hence, more rights over the language. Thus, with respect to Mauritian,

Creoles have a linguistic advantage over other ethnic groups. In other words, Creoles seem to enjoy certain additional privileges over Mauritian and consequently, they could be said to have more rights to claim ownership of the language. These arguments point to the possibility that Mauritian is more an ethnic language than a national one. That is, Mauritian belongs to the Mauritian Creoles more than the whole Mauritian nation.

Moreover, Fathers Fanchette and Cerveaux, interviewed individually in 2003, also suggest an association between the Creole ethnic group and Mauritian although they do not explicitly argue that Creoles own the language. Father Fanchette clearly says that he does not believe that languages are owned by specific groups, i.e., languages belong to everybody yet nobody specifically. From this perspective, therefore, anybody could own Mauritian. However, Father Fanchette highlights the link between Mauritian and the Creole ethnic group. Father Fanchette is actively involved in promoting Mauritian in the Church. He feels that through recognition of the language, those Christians for whom Mauritian is their native and only/main language will be revalorised (Rajah-Carrim 2004a). He sees the introduction of Mauritian in the Church as of primary benefit to the Creole ethnic group whose culture and language have largely been ignored by what Father Fanchette called the "francophone and francophile" Church (also, section 4.1, Chapter 4).

Father Fanchette also believes that Mauritian should be used as a medium of instruction in schools. In the school close to the Roche-Bois Church, rates of failure at the end of primary school are very high. Father Fanchette partly attributes this to

the use of a foreign medium of instruction. The Creole children who attend classes in this school are forced to learn new concepts in a new language and are even taught to look down on their own native language and culture. Father Fanchette's response echoes that of Raymond who believes that the promotion of Mauritian might help to "revalorise the Creole". Although neither Raymond nor Father Fanchette clearly claim that Mauritian belongs to Creoles, their responses suggest that there is a link between the language and the ethnic group and more importantly, this link is much stronger than that between the language and other groups. Thus, compared to other groups, Creoles share a closer relationship with the language.

Father Cerveaux also highlights the close link between the ethnic group Creoles and the language although like Raymond and Father Fanchette, he does not claim that Creoles own the language. Father Cerveaux believes that for historical reasons, the Mauritian language is strongly associated with Creoles who had lost their ancestral languages and cultures through slavery. Although Mauritian has now become the native language of most Mauritians and is widely used across the nation, it shares a stronger historical link with Creoles than other groups. That is why Father Cerveaux prefers calling the language *Kreol* rather than *Morisien*. The term *Kreol*, according to him, underlines the origin of the language and emphasises its association with the group. He believes that the language cannot just become *Morisien* because its origins have to be acknowledged. For Father Cerveaux, a fair compromise would be to call the variety *Kreol Morisien*, thereby recognising its origins and its link with the Creole population. For Father Cerveaux, Mauritian is seen as belonging primarily to the Creole group: Mauritian is their native and ancestral language.

Moreover, Father Cerveaux's view is endorsed by some other Mauritians. In an interview in March 2004, Danielle Turner of the pro-Creole group *Groupement pour le respect du devoir de mémoire* states that[21]

> We are against not calling this language *Kreol*. We want this language to be known as *Kreol* and not as the *Mauritian language*. This is dangerous and it's a form of genocide to want to "rebaptise" this language (…) Kreol was born at a time of suffering and chaos. We shouldn't forget that.
>
> (*Le Mauricien*, 17 March 2004)

The above extract serves to further highlight the link between the Creole group and the Mauritian language. In this extract, Mauritian is seen as the language of the Creoles. From this perspective then, taking a language that belongs to the Creoles and turning it into a national language means depriving this socially and economically disadvantaged group of their legitimate due. Unlike other ethnic groups, the Creoles have been stripped of their past and have had to adapt and adopt new ways and values. Like people of African origins in Trinidad (Munasinghe 1997) and Belize (Bonner 2001), the Afro-Mauritians are associated with cultural nakedness. The cultural nakedness of the descendants of Africans in Mauritius and Trinidad, for instance, have led to the creation of new cultural and linguistic indexes of identity. Father Cerveaux and Danielle Turner fear that ignoring the Creole contribution to Mauritian, this new linguistic marker of identity, could further add to the low self-esteem of this group. First, what is legitimately theirs is taken away from them and second, their contribution or attachment to it is ignored. And they seem to have no voice on the matter. This can only add to the already-existing *malaise créole* (Chapter 2).

Dr Arnaud Carpooran, creolist at the University of Mauritius interviewed in 2003, adopts an ideology similar to the one discussed in the above paragraphs. Like Fathers Fanchette and Cerveaux, he believes that Mauritian is the ancestral language of the Creoles. But he argues that all Mauritians have a right over the language that is now widely used across the island. In other words, he sees no objection to Mauritian functioning as the language of the whole nation. Thus, the language belongs to the Mauritian nation even though historically, it was first the native language of the slaves. He does not believe that it is a drawback to the Creoles if their ancestral language functions as national language[22].

> The Creoles have a historical relationship with the language. But I don't see any difficulty for the language to be both the ancestral language of the Creoles and the national language.

Unlike Father Cerveaux and Turner, Dr Carpooran does not think that the name chosen for the variety should contain an indication of its origins and link with the Creole population. Therefore, Dr Carpooran, like Father Fanchette, could be said to adopt a less ethnicised perspective than Father Cerveaux and Turner. That is, while the ethnic origin of Mauritian is not denied, it is not seen as central to the language.

Thus far, therefore, we have not found any explicit answer to who owns Mauritian. Some responses point to the fact that Creoles have more reasons to claim ownership of the language, yet the responses do not explicitly say that they are the sole owners of the language. Mauritian is generally seen as belonging to the whole Mauritian nation, which is a culturally and socially heterogeneous group. If we were forced to single out one homogeneous cultural group as having more rights over the language than other cultural groups, then it would have to be the Creoles. As suggested above,

two main arguments lead to this conclusion. First, we have seen that they have a strong historical association with the language which through slavery and deculturation has become their ancestral language; and second, they are generally thought of as speaking the purest form of the language.

In the section below, we tackle the question of ownership from a different perspective. We look at the frequency of use of Mauritian among the different groups with a view of finding out who have more rights to claim ownership of the language.

7.6 Who speaks Mauritian most?

Since the criteria discussed in the above sections have not given us a definite answer as to who owns Mauritian, it might be useful to find out who uses the language most. That is, a description of the most frequent speaker of Mauritian can help us identify the owner of the language. The assumption is that those who speak Mauritian most frequently are the most suitable candidates for claiming and being assigned ownership of the language – since Mauritian is part of their daily routines. They are those people who first come to mind when referring to users of Mauritian.

In the survey, interviewees were asked to give a description of the people who use Mauritian most. The question was phrased as follows (DQ4, Appendix I): *Who are the people who use Mauritian most?* The four main features targeted were age, gender, ethnicity and religion. So, examples of answers probed for included old male Afro-Mauritian, old female Afro-Mauritian, old male Indo-Mauritian Hindu, old female Indo-Mauritian Muslim, young female Indo-Mauritian Tamil, old female

Franco-Mauritian and young male Sino-Mauritian. But no such responses were gathered. In fact, most interviewees needed prompting at this stage. But even with some help, interviewees could not give a specific answer to this question. Sometimes, I was given the impression that this question was irrational because as all interviewees pointed out, all Mauritians speak Mauritian. It was therefore difficult for them to separate the population in terms of frequency of use of Mauritian:

Ex 7.3 Zot tu koz kreol (Manisha, 20-39, IMH)
  Everybody speaks Creole.

Ex 7.4 Difisil dir. Tu morisien koz kreol (Nima, >59, IMM)
  Difficult to say. All Mauritians speak Creole.

Ex 7.5 All Mauritians use Creole (Sushita, 20-39, IMH)

Mauritian is generally perceived as a national phenomenon, rather an ethnic, religious or male/female one. These findings suggest that the most frequent speakers of Mauritian are Mauritians generally and not subgroups within the nation.

If we take the most frequent users of Mauritian to be the owners of the language, then we should claim that the language belongs to the whole nation. Indeed, the above paragraph suggests that Mauritian is generally associated with all Mauritians. There were no distinctions on the basis of ethnicity, religion, age or gender. Social classes were not mentioned either. It is worth noting that the attitude of respondents to this question suggests that the answer is obvious. It is clear to any Mauritian that all Mauritians, irrespective of their background, use this language extensively. Hence, it is hard to establish a quantitative scale of frequency of use. The general impression is that Mauritian is used by everyone all the time. The survey question is therefore difficult, if not impossible, to answer. On the basis of these findings, it can

be argued that Mauritian is neither the language of the Creoles only nor that of the males only, for instance.

However, it should be pointed out that although some respondents claimed that Mauritian was used by all Mauritians, they added that it might be more frequently used by youngsters.

Ex 7.6 Kapav ban zene servi kreol plis (Momin, >59, IMM)
Maybe the youth use Creole the most.

Ex 7.7 Sirtu ban jeunes (Saroj, 20-39, IMH)
Especially the youth.

Ex 7.8 Peut-être les jeunes plus (Joanne, 20-39, CP)
Maybe the youth more.

Mauritian, in these cases, is seen as the language of the youth. It is not clear which age-range is defined by the term *ban zene, les jeunes*. It is likely that *zene* refers to those aged 30 and below. Interviewees' responses suggest that many middle-aged (Indo-) Mauritians are likely to have some competence in ancestral languages and use these varieties with old people, i.e., people of their parents' generation. As for the younger generations, they tend to have limited knowledge of their ancestral language which they hardly use. Because Mauritian is now used in environments where ancestral languages were previously spoken, Mauritians, especially the younger generations, have more exposure to Mauritian and less exposure to ancestral languages. These responses suggest that Mauritian indexes youth. Hence, the language is not only an index of ethnic identity. In fact, Mauritian indexes a number of social categories, youth and ethnicity being some of them.

Moreover, nowadays through radio and television programmes, youngsters have more exposure to Mauritian than their parents would have had. Mauritian could almost be described as a trendy language in that new terms and new expressions are being introduced at a rapid speed in the language[23]. Also, as mentioned in Chapter 4, emails and text messaging, two dynamic means of communication especially used by young people, make important use of Mauritian and highlight the creativity associated with the language. Trends and creativity are generally linked with youth rather than older generations. Thus, it can be understood why some interviewees feel that Mauritian is the language of the youth.

Also, Mauritian is the language of friendship used in informal interactions. As some of the interviewees argue, people of older generations (60 and above) sometimes use ancestral languages in inter-ethnic communication with their peers. Nowadays, even if young Tamils are talking to each other, it is most unlikely that they will use their ancestral language, Tamil. They will converse in Mauritian. While Mauritian is a lingua franca for older generations, it has become the first language of most of the youngsters today. Even those who do not have Mauritian as their first language will use it when talking to friends. For instance, Franco-Mauritian Eric whose native language is French clearly states using Mauritian with his friends. Therefore, a difference in frequency of use of Mauritian can be observed among the "older generation" (60 and above) and the younger ones. The linguistic behaviour of those aged between 30 and 60 years is not clear-cut. They might represent the half-way between the retired generation and the youth. That is, while the 30-60 cohort widely speak Mauritian, they still use ancestral languages in certain domains, as stated by

Mona. Also, as Chapter 4 shows, their use of Mauritian in the written domain tends to be limited compared to that of young Mauritians. Therefore, it is not surprising that some interviewees believe that young people use Mauritian the most.

Overall therefore, the question regarding the most frequent user of Mauritian did not yield any definite answer as to who owns the language. Some responses suggest that Mauritian is mostly used by the younger generations, irrespective of their ethnicity, religion and gender. But no exact age-range is mentioned. The majority of responses suggest that Mauritians as a nation, and not subgroups within this nation, are the most frequent speakers of Mauritian. Thus, the Mauritian nation owns the language. This echoes the observations made in section 7.4.1 where it was argued that the language is owned by Mauritians of various ethnicities and religions as they are the native speakers of the language.

Since the direct question regarding the most frequent users of Mauritian yielded a non-specific answer, it might be worth looking at those Mauritians who do not know and use the language at all. That is, by identifying those who do not use Mauritian, we can infer who are those who do use the language. On the basis of the observations in the above paragraphs, we would expect some interviewees to argue that the old generations do not use Mauritian at all, or use it in a restricted way. However, no such responses were obtained. As mentioned above, most interviewees believe that all Mauritians know Mauritian. Some of them even claim that "to be Mauritian, one has to know Mauritian". Even though all Mauritians know the language, not all of them use it. But then again, my interviewees pointed out that it was not possible to

live in Mauritius and not use Mauritian at all. Residents automatically encounter situations where they have to use Mauritian, regardless of their class or ethnic background, e.g., in the market, in the bus, with maids.

However, there are certain categories of Mauritians who avoid using Mauritian. For instance, this group is thought to include Franco-Mauritians. Twenty-five respondents believe that many Franco-Mauritians do not generally use Mauritian but sometimes they are forced to use the language. But it is clear that the Franco-Mauritians in this corpus do use Mauritian. Indeed, Eric, Raymond, Gladys, Lily, Emie, Veronique and even Mée, who despises Mauritian, all claim using the language in certain domains. Franco-Mauritians are therefore singled out as a non-Mauritian-speaking group just like the Creoles are singled out as a Mauritian-speaking group. On the basis of these responses, it can be argued that Mauritian is not generally linked with Franco-Mauritians. Therefore, they cannot be assigned ownership of the language. It should be pointed out that the Franco-Mauritians interviewed in this study, with the exception of Mée, do state their liking for the language.

The "non-Mauritian-speaking group" also comprises those people who feel that it is debasing to use Mauritian and prefer using French. This group, according to my respondents, generally include "snobs" (*snob, gran noir, vantar*) who "pretend (*faire semblan*) not to know" Mauritian. These people are of various ethnicities. The economic ascendance of the *snobs* and *nouveaux riches* is therefore reflected in their linguistic behaviour: it is beyond their status to use a creole variety.

The information gathered in the questions relating to use and knowledge of Mauritian is summarised in the table below.

1.	Most frequent users of Mauritian	Generally all Mauritians
		Youth
2.	Mauritians with no knowledge of Mauritian	None
3.	Mauritians who do not use Mauritian	Franco-Mauritians
		"Snobs"

Table 7.3. Users and non-users of Mauritian

Table 7.3 suggests that the non-users of Mauritian make up a small group, i.e., the Franco-Mauritians and the snobs make up a small proportion of the total population. Thus, the majority of the population use Mauritian. Furthermore, by a process of elimination, we could argue that the most frequent speakers of Mauritian, i.e., likely candidates for claiming ownership of the language, include Mauritians who are neither Franco-Mauritians nor "snobs". This leads us to conclude that the most frequent users of Mauritian are Hindus, Muslims, Creoles, Coloured People and Sino-Mauritians. It should be noted that "snobs" could be found in any of the above ethnic and religious groups. Table 7.3 could suggest that the most frequent speakers of Mauritian are young unaffected non-Franco-Mauritians.

A very important point is that no interviewee suggests that the most frequent speaker of Mauritian is the Afro-Mauritian or Creole. Section 7.4.2 showed that there are some historical reasons for saying that Mauritian belongs to the Creole section of the population. If the owner of Mauritian is the most frequent speaker of the language,

we might have expected some interviewees to argue that the most frequent speakers of Mauritian are of Creole ethnicity. But this is not the case. The Africanness of the users of the language is not brought out in the interviews. Responses relating to most frequent users support the claims made in section 7.4.1 where it was argued that the whole Mauritian nation owns Mauritian.

On the basis of the criteria set for linguistic ownership and the responses explored in this section, we could argue that the owner of Mauritian is the Mauritian nation as a whole. Although Creoles have a stronger historical link with the language than other ethnic, religious and social groups on the island, they are not the sole native speakers of the language and the only group to have an attachment to the language. Mauritian is a language that the whole nation seems to identify with. As respondents put it, *on aime bien ce petit parler Creole* ("We like this little Creole talk" – Gladys, >59, FM), *tou Morisien bizin kone koz kreol* ("All Mauritians should know how to speak Creole" – Dawood, 40-59, IMM) and *ene vre Morisien bizin koz kreol* ("A true Mauritian has to speak Creole" – Rehaz, 20-39, IMM). Hence, the fact that Afro-Mauritians have a stronger historical link with Mauritian than other groups might give them special rights over the language, but it does not prevent other groups from claiming ownership of the language too.

7.7 Illustrating linguistic ownership

The arguments developed above are illustrated in the following venn diagram.
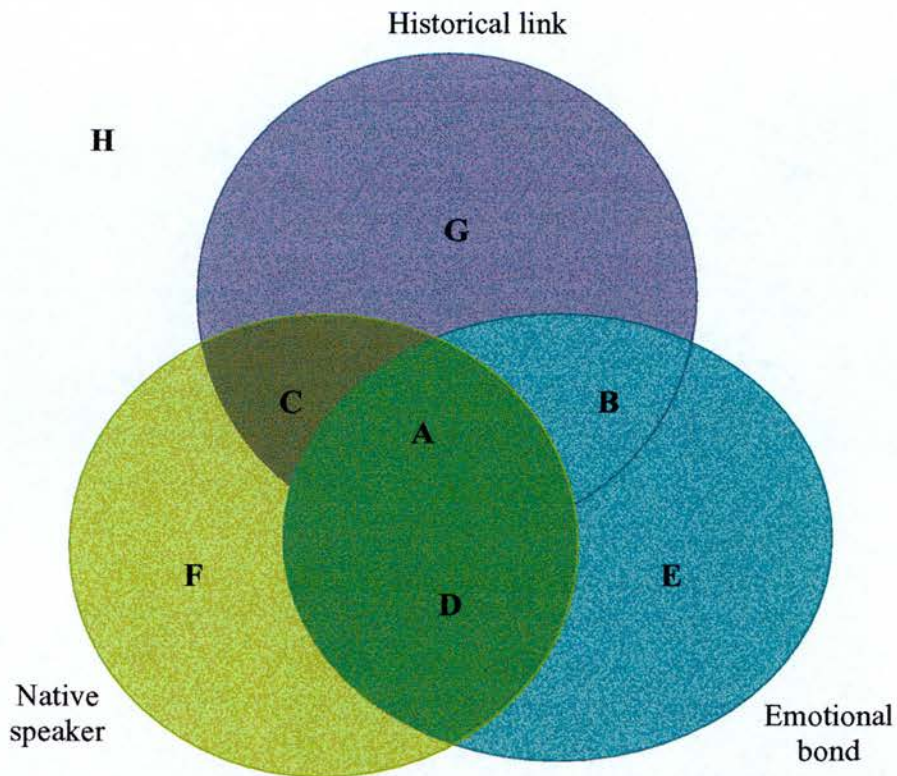
Figure 7.3. Linguistic ownership in the Mauritian context.

In Figure 7.3, set A corresponds to those native speakers of Mauritian who also have a historical link and an emotional bond with the language. Set B is made up of those people who are not native speakers of Mauritian but have an emotional and historical attachment to the language. Set C includes native speakers of Mauritian who have a historical link but no emotional bond with the language. Set D corresponds to those people who are native speakers of Mauritian and have an emotional attachment to the language, but no historical bond with it. Sets E, F and G all comprise people who have only one of the criteria of ownership, as developed in section 7.2. H is a group/person who is not a native speaker of Mauritian, and who does not have any historical and emotional link with the language.

Region A is the intersection of all the three criteria, i.e., the three main sets. Therefore, members of set A can be said to be the legitimate owners of Mauritian in that they combine all three pre-requisites for claiming and assigning ownership of the language. They are thus the "ideal" owners of the language. Sets B, C, D, E, F and G display varying degrees of departure from this ideal. Indeed, Figure 7.3 shows that sets B, C and D depart by only 1 criterion while the remaining three sets differ by two criteria. Thus, the first three sets are closer to the ideal owner of Mauritian than the last three ones. And, H shows maximal departure from A and therefore, has no grounds to claim ownership of Mauritian.

On the basis of the arguments put forward in section 7.4, it seems that many Afro-Mauritians, i.e., Creoles, would fit into set A. Indeed, they are native speakers of the language, have a direct historical link with the language and seem to have a bond with this variety which is both their native and ancestral language. A could also include some members of the Coloured Population, those members who neither despise their African identity nor aspire to an inclusion in the francophone sociocultural group. That they do not despise their African ancestry could be reflected in their emotional attachment to Mauritian and their admission that it is their ancestral language. It should be noted that it is very likely to find feelings of shame and the desire to assimilate to a "higher" sociocultural group among some Creoles as well. Those Creoles and members of the Coloured Population who display such attitudes towards their language and culture could then be grouped either in sets C or G. Because set A is the intersection of the three criteria of linguistic ownership, it is a relatively small group. Thus, in this group, we have interviewees like Jean-

François (13-19, AF), Yolande (40-59, AF) and Frances (>59, CP) who all share a historical and emotional relationship with their native language, Mauritian.

Set C consists of those native speakers who although they have a historical link with Mauritian, do not identify with it. They show no emotional attachment to their native language. It is possible to have native speakers despising their own language. Studies of immigrant and/or minority communities have shown how native speakers of the immigrant or minority language can look down on their own language and favour the dominant language. Such attitudes can especially be found in groups with low ethnolinguistic vitality (EV) (e.g., Garner 1988, Yağmur *et al.* 1999, Jongenburger & Aarssen 2001, Govindasamy and Nambiar 2003). EV has been defined as "that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in inter-group situations" (Giles *et al.* 1977: 308). A theory of EV focuses on the social psychological relationship between group identity and language. Three factors are taken into consideration in assessing a group's EV: status, demographics and institutional support. On the basis of a group's rating in these domains, it can then be said to have low, medium or high vitality. Generally, it is expected that groups with high vitality will resist assimilation and maintain their language while those with low vitality will adopt the dominant group's language (Bourhis *et al.* 1981). Low EV can therefore ultimately lead to language shift.

People in set C, therefore, do not display any positive emotional attachment – an important criterion for linguistic ownership – to the language. By addressing the individual's feelings, set C provides a "social psychological input" (Giles & Johnson 1987: 69) to theories of linguistic ownership. The sizes of sets A and C are inversely

related. That is, the bigger set A is, the smaller set C will be, and vice-versa. All the sets in Figure 7.3 show similar inverse relationships, as will become clear in the following paragraphs.

Set G also comprises people who do not display any attachment to Mauritian. But unlike those people in C, the ones of set G do not have Mauritian as their native language. G, therefore, could include those Afro-Mauritians or Coloured People who (or rather, whose parents) have adopted a language other than Mauritian as their native language. Hence, these people show no link, except for the historical one, with the language. It is possible to imagine that their (grand)parents were members of set C, who switched from speaking Mauritian to French or another language at home. Thus, it could be argued that the people of set G do not identify with Mauritian for two reasons: they do not speak the language natively and they do not have any emotional bond with it. Given this state of affairs, it is very likely that set G comprises only a small proportion of the total population. Indeed, it is likely that there are few Coloured People/Creoles who do not speak Mauritian natively and also, do not have any attachment to the language. We could include somebody like Tonton in this set. As a member of the Coloured Population, Tonton has a historical relationship with Mauritian. But his native language is French. He generally shows negative attitudes towards Mauritian and displays no attachment to the language.

Set F also consists of those people who have no emotional attachment to Mauritian. In fact, set F comprises native speakers of Mauritian who have neither a historical nor an emotional link with the language. These people could be Indo-, Sino- or even

Franco-Mauritians, i.e., those groups whose historical relationship with Mauritian is less strong than that of Afro-Mauritians and Coloured People. The ancestors of these ethnic/religious groups acquired Mauritian and started using it at home. Thus, it became their native language. However, it is likely that members of some of the above-mentioned groups speak Mauritian *malgré eux*, i.e., had they been given the choice, they would have opted for another native language. Like the members of group C, they might choose to use a language other than Mauritian with their children. This is so because they feel no positive affinity with the language. The 2002 survey does not include many Mauritians who would fit into set F. But one example is Yamesh (40-59, IMH). Mauritian is his native language. But he shows negative attitudes towards the variety (e.g., section 5.4, Chapter 5). He even believes that Mauritian is not a language but only a broken variety of French. And he argues that the language is imposed by the media. Thus, he represents a case of those people who look down on their own native language and consequently, fit into set F.

If members of sets C, G and F cannot feel any strong positive attachment to Mauritian, members of sets A, B, D and E do display an emotional bond with the language. For instance, members of set B have an emotional and a historical attachment to Mauritian, but are not native speakers of the language. With the growing pride in African culture, it is possible to find people in the situation described by set B. In this set, we could find Coloured People or Creoles whose parents switched to a language other than Mauritian in order to move up the social ladder. That is, those parents could be part of sets G or C. Unlike these parents, the children feel proud of their African ancestry and their ancestral language. Their desire to assert their African identity can be seen in their emotional attachment to the

language. They are thus members of set B. It is also possible that these people will choose to speak Mauritian to their own children. Figure 7.3 deals only with linguistic ownership in the Mauritian context. But had it included Creoles or Coloured People who had settled abroad, then we could also find the children of these Mauritians in set B. That is, although these children might not have native competence in Mauritian, they might display an emotional attachment to the language. Their historical relationship with Mauritian is due to their parents' own link with the language.

Emotional attachment does not necessarily imply historical bond. This is reflected in sets D and E. Native speakers of Mauritian who have an emotional bond to the language, but have no historical link with the language, are included in set D. From the discussions in the previous chapters and sections above, it appears that many Mauritians would fit into set D. All the non-Creole and non-Coloured Mauritians who have Mauritian as their native language and display an attachment to the language are members of set D. This set, therefore, could include Hindus, Muslims and Sino-Mauritians. It is unlikely that the set also comprises Franco-Mauritians because French, rather than Mauritian, appears to function as their native language. Therefore, interviewees like Mira (13-19, IMH), Rehaz (20-39, IMM), Saroj (20-39, IMH), Suresh (40-59, IMH) and Dawood (40-59, IMM) would be part of this set because they all speak Mauritian natively and also, display a clear liking for the language.

Group E appears to be a relatively small group. First, it excludes all those who are historically related to Mauritian, i.e, Creoles and Coloured People. Then, it excludes

the native speakers of the language, i.e., at least 70% of the total Mauritian Population. In set E, therefore, we could find Franco-, Indo- and Sino-Mauritians who are non-native speakers of Mauritian, but have an attachment to the language. Not being native speakers of the language does not mean that these Mauritians do not know or use the language. Questions dealing with most frequent users of Mauritian have shown that all Mauritians know the language and also, use it to varying degrees. For instance, despite the fact that Mauritian is not the native language of interviewees like Gladys (>59, FM), Emie (>59, FM), Zain (20-39, IMM) and Nima (>59, IMM), their interviews suggest that they identify with the language which has an important role in their daily lives.

The venn diagram in Figure 7.3 above illustrates the concept of ownership of Mauritian using the criteria developed in section 7.2. Members of set A could be unproblematically described as the ideal owners of Mauritian in that they combine the three criteria for claiming and assigning linguistic ownership. Our discussion supports the claim that the three criteria native competence, historical link and emotional bond are important for claiming and assigning membership of Mauritian, but are not sufficient on their own. Therefore, all the three criteria have an important role to play in the definition of the owner of Mauritian. Clearly the ideal owner of Mauritian is the person who has a historical link with the language, speaks it as a first language and also, has an emotional attachment to the variety. But the 2002 interviews suggest some Mauritians claim ownership of the language even though they do not meet all three conditions of ownership. In the same way, some Mauritians who do not display all the three criteria discussed above can be assigned ownership of the language. For instance, Creoles are generally associated with

Mauritian, irrespective of whether or not they speak the language natively and display an attachment to it. This association is based on historical bond with the language. Therefore, is there one criterion that is most important in the definition of the owner of Mauritian or do all the three criteria have equal weight?

It appears that emotional attachment to the language is the most important criterion. For instance, members of sets G, C and F show no emotional attachment to Mauritian, yet they either speak the language natively (set F) or have a historical bond with the language (set G) or speak the language natively and are historically related to Mauritian (set C). However, because they do not show any positive emotional affiliation with Mauritian, it is unlikely that they would willingly claim ownership of the language. In other words, why would they want to own a language that they do not value? However, it should be noted that they could be <u>assigned</u> ownership on the basis of their native knowledge of, and historical link with, the language – ownership that they can either accept or reject. For instance, it is likely that interviewees like Pauline (40-59, CP) and Tonton (>59, CP), who could be assigned ownership of Mauritian on the basis of their historical bond with the language, would want to distance themselves from the language and reject its ownership (e.g., *ex 5.6*, Chapter 5). It is also most unlikely that Yamesh (40-59, IMH) who looks down on Mauritian, his native language, would accept ownership of the language. Such a state of affairs can be explained by the fact that he does not display any positive affiliation with the language and also, shows strong affiliations with Hindi.

Furthermore, it is unlikely that ownership of Mauritian is assigned to somebody like Veronique (>59, FM) who neither speaks the language natively nor has any direct historical link with the language. Yet, Veronique maintains that Mauritian is her language. It belongs to her because she is Mauritian:

Ex 7.9 Le Morisien c'est ma langue
"Le Morisien", it's my language.

Her emotional attachment and positive attitudes to the language give her the right to claim ownership of the language. Respondents like Rehaz (20-39, IMM) and Viraj (13-19, IMH) who speak Mauritian natively but are not historically associated with the language also describe the language as theirs. Thus, their native competence in the language and most importantly, their emotional attachment to the language support their claim for ownership of the language. Emotional attachment is, therefore, a crucial criterion in claiming ownership of a language in the Mauritian context. It follows quite logically that only people who feel a positive affinity with a language will want to claim ownership of that language. People who look down on a language or even, are indifferent to it, are most unlikely to want to claim its ownership. Instead, their aim could be to distance themselves from the language and those who are associated with it.

It has now become clear that Mauritian is not only the prerogative of Creoles and members of the Coloured Population. Why is it then that Mauritian has come to be associated with Creoles? While laypeople see Mauritian as a national language, there are some groups that promote Mauritian as an ethnic language. It is seen as the language of the descendants of Creoles. Thus, they have more rights over the language than other Mauritians. According to Dev Virahsawmy (personal

communication, interview in 2002), this is a relatively new phenomenon. Saroj (20-39, IMH) echoes Virahsawmy when she says that "it's only now that the language is associated with the Creoles" (*se seulemen maintenan ki la lang associe ek bane Créoles*). Thus, the politicisation of ethnicity and subsequent ethnicisation of language have led some people to assign an ethnic connotation to Mauritian. The ethnicisation of language has had an important role to play in adding ethnic connotations to the languages spoken on the island (e.g., Eisenlohr 2004). Even Mauritian has taken an ethnic meaning. Interestingly, although the Government have no clear language policies, they indirectly promote Mauritian as an ethnic language. For instance, the association of Mauritian with the Nelson Mandela African Cultural Centre situates the language in an African context. Thus, the Government underline the link between African culture and Mauritian language. Had Mauritian been seen as a national language by the ruling parties, would it not have been associated with a national group rather than the African cultural group?

The ownership of Mauritian has raised several interesting issues. Here is a brief recap of the complex situation that Mauritian finds itself in. First, there was no indigenous language spoken on the island at the time of its discovery. With immigration, different cultures and languages were brought to the island. In fact, all the languages spoken in Mauritius have been "imported", with the exception of Mauritian. Even though many of the other languages spoken on the island are now spoken with a Mauritian accent and/or have incorporated Mauritian terms, Mauritian is the only language that is indigenous to Mauritius. However, Mauritian had already evolved into a fully-fledged means of communication by the time of the arrival of indentured labourers (Baker & Corne 1986). Thus, by the end of the French era,

Mauritian was already a common means of communication. Mauritian had so far mainly been used as a medium of communication by African slaves, French masters and free Coloured people. From a historical perspective, therefore, Mauritian first evolved as the language of the African and Afro-Mauritian slaves. When the indentured labourers arrived, Mauritian functioned as a lingua franca for inter-group communication. Since the indentured labourers were allowed to keep their Indian languages, Mauritian did not immediately become their first language.

As the linguistic, socio-economic and political situations of Mauritius have evolved, the role of Mauritian has changed significantly. It has clearly become the first language of the majority of Mauritians and the language of inter-group communication *par excellence*. In fact, it has also become the language of in-group communication. While respondents like Momin (>59, IMM), Asmah (>59, IMM) and Bhay (>59, IMH) may still use their ancestral languages with their peers, most respondents claim using Mauritian in informal conversations with their contemporaries. Mauritian is even gaining grounds in informal written domains (Chapter 4). Mauritian, therefore, plays a significant role in the life of most Mauritians, irrespective of whether or not it is also their first language. Therefore, as the linguistic situation of the island has evolved, Mauritian has changed from being the first language of only the descendants of slaves to that of most descendants of Indian indentured labourers. It has also become the first language of an important number of Sino-Mauritians. Therefore, although Mauritian might have started off as an ethnic language, it has now clearly acquired a multi-ethnic dimension. But Mauritian is not an ethnically neutral language. Indeed, the above discussion shows that there are reasons to index Mauritian with the Creole community – historical

reasons and/or social prejudices. But with the search for a national language at the time of independence, these reasons were backgrounded. Thus Mauritian has become the language of the Mauritian nation, that is, it belongs to all Mauritians.

However, with the current ethnicisation of languages, it seems that these reasons might come to the foreground once more. It is argued that there are some groups within the Mauritian nation who have more rights over the language due to socio-historical and cultural factors (section 7.4.4). So, what does the above discussion tell us about the status of Mauritian?

7.8 Mauritian: a national or an ethnic language?

In Figure 7.3, the owners of Mauritian are defined in terms of their position with respect to set A. Centrally, we find those Mauritians who combine the different conditions of ownership. The further away we move from the intersecting part of the venn diagram in Figure 7.3, the least conformity to the ownership criteria do we find. In set A, we tend to find Creoles: they are historically and emotionally linked with Mauritian, tend to have Mauritian as their first language and are thought to speak the purest form of the language. Also, they have no allegiance to other ancestral languages. In the other sets, therefore, we find mostly non-Creoles.

The above paragraph suggests that Mauritians are grouped in Figure 7.3 on the basis of their ethnicity. But this does not have to be the case. By a concurrence of facts (and prejudices), Creoles happen to be at the centre of the diagram. Thus, it is useful to draw a Creole and non-Creole distinction. Furthermore, members of other sets are described in terms of their ethnicity in order to conform to the Mauritian tendency to

categorise people according to their ethnic and/or religious groups and also, to the general approach adopted in this dissertation. Figure 7.3 could also be interpreted in terms of degrees of creolisation (see discussion on creolisation in Chapter 2), as discussed below.

Ideal owners are those who show the greatest degree of creolisation. And, the most creolised Mauritian happens to be described quite simply as the Creole. The further away from the ideal owner do we move, the less creolisation do we find. Thus, Mauritians in sets B to G are less creolised than Mauritians in set A. All Mauritian members of Figure 7.3 will show some degree of creolisation because all Mauritians are more or less creolised (Chapter 2). It should be noted that creolisation refers to a broad cultural process and not exclusively to an ethnicisation process. As such, it is a national phenomenon. This line of reasoning is non-ethnic as we have established that creolisation is not an ethnicisation process as such. In the Mauritian context, it takes the form of a national process. Through creolisation, shared norms and adaptation strategies to the local situation are developed by various ethnic, socio-economic and religious groups. The form of creolisation in the Mauritian context could be referred to as "Mauritianisation". Hence, this means that the ideal owners are the most Mauritianised ones.

Linguistic ownership as depicted above, therefore, centres around the concept of Mauritianisation. In other words, the "more Mauritian" people are, the better suited they are to be owners of Mauritian. Ownership of Mauritian is hence intimately tied to notion of "Mauritianhood". Nationality seems to be the factor for determining ownership of Mauritian. As such, any Mauritian can be the owner of the language

while non-Mauritians have no rights over the language. Given that in our model Mauritian is the language of Mauritians (as opposed to non-Mauritians), it should be described as a national language. The ideal owners are those who are "most Mauritian" while the other owners are the "least Mauritian" ones within the Mauritian nation. It all revolves around the concept of Mauritianhood. On the basis of the above paragraphs, we should therefore establish that although Mauritian might be the ancestral language of predominantly the Creoles, it currently belongs to all Mauritians, irrespective of their own ancestral languages and cultures[24].

Moreover, the question of ownership of Mauritian has centred around whether it is the Afro-Mauritian (and some Coloured People) or the Mauritian nation who owns Mauritian. In the first situation, the Creole group are set in opposition to the other ethnic groups on the island. No further ethnic subdivisions are made. For instance, we do not consider Franco-Mauritians and Indo-Mauritians individually: it is a simple case of Creoles v/s non-Creoles. In the second situation, the Mauritian nation is considered as a whole. Mauritian has an important role to play in the identity of both Creoles and the Republic of Mauritius. The Creoles and the Mauritian nation as a whole are now building their identity. In fact, the situation of Creoles can be seen as a micro reflection of the changes and search for a distinct identity that the Mauritian nation is going through. Putting it differently, we could say that the Mauritian nation magnifies the changes that the Creole community is undergoing. There are thus interesting parallels between the two groups. And both communities need to have a distinct language with which to identify. Ultimately, it might not matter whether Mauritian belongs to Creoles or to the Mauritian nation as both groups are in search of a distinct identity.

As an ethnic or cultural group, Creoles need to have an ancestral language of their own. Since they have been largely deprived of their African heritage, they need to look elsewhere for their ancestral language. Mauritian fills the "ancestral language gap" that Creoles experience with respect to the other ethnic groups on the island. That is, just like other ethnic groups in Mauritius, Creoles can also be defined in terms of their ancestral language.

Furthermore, as a nation, Mauritians need to have a national language of their own. In fact, the choice of a national language can be considered as "a step in the process of asserting the nationhood of a newly independent or established nation" (Holmes 1992: 106). Since Mauritius has no indigenous population and consequently, is a nation of immigrants, it has to look for a national language among the (mostly imported) languages currently used in the local context. All the Asian languages are ethnically indexed in that they are associated with specific ethnic and/or religious groups and also, they are used by a minority of Mauritians. As for French, it is known by a significant number of Mauritians; but it is associated with the socio-economically dominant Franco-Mauritians, i.e., the descendants of the colonisers. Adopting French as a national language could therefore symbolise adoption of the dominant group ideology and be reminiscent of colonial times. Mauritius would not be seen as developing its own identity but rather as adopting that of its former rulers.

Like French, English is the language of past colonisers, but unlike French, it is not associated with any ethnic group on the island. It has been argued that its neutrality makes it an ideal official language (Stein 1997, Eriksen 1998). Could it function as a

national language? The answer is probably no. First, competence in English is generally low. English is only used as the language of education and administration. Its use in informal interactions is limited, if not absent (Foley 1992, Stein 1997). It is not used to convey affective meaning. Second, even though English is ethnically unmarked, it still stands as the language of a dominant group. It is the language of imperial powers and domination (Phillipson 1992) and the language of "globalisation", a process that can be both positively or negatively evaluated (Chapter 5). We are therefore left with the extensively used Mauritian.

Compared to all the other languages used on the island, Mauritian is the one that is most widely spoken and the one that has developed on the island. Thus, it can be said to be indigenous to the island. Also, knowledge of the language is not dependent on ethnicity or religious background, but rather on membership to the Mauritian nation. However, as shown above, some people consider Mauritian to be the ancestral language of the Creoles, hence, an ethnic language. But this does not prevent it from also functioning as a national language. It is known by all Mauritians and is the native language of most Mauritians. As such, it is the language that all Mauritians can identify with – simply by virtue of being Mauritian. That it is also the ancestral language of Creoles does not affect its status as a national language. It could be argued that ideally in a culturally heterogeneous place like Mauritius, the national language should not be ethnically marked at all. But compared to other languages, Mauritian is the least ethnically marked language in that it has acquired a strong supra-ethnic significance. Therefore, it is the best suited language to fill the "national language gap" that Mauritius experiences with respect to other nations.

But does the role of Mauritian as a national language impinge on its status as the ancestral language of Creoles? There are two perspectives to this question. In the first case, it is a matter of pride to the Creole community that their ancestral language has been chosen to become a national symbol. The elevation of their language to a national level can add to the self-esteem of this deprived group. They have offered a multi-ethnic nation a unifying symbol of national identity. This view is put forward by the priest Mgr Nagapen (Chapter 3), for instance. Another approach would be to see the use of the Creoles' ancestral language as a national symbol as a setback. I did not encounter any such feelings in my corpus. However, Father Cerveaux does mention that if Mauritian is to function as a national language, its creole origins have to be asserted in the very appellation chosen for the language. In this way, Mauritian's status as a national language would not impinge on the language's role as a marker of ethnic identity. Mauritian, therefore, can function both as a national and an ethnic language. Its association with the socio-economically deprived Creole community could lead some people to distance themselves from the language. But this is probably the attitude of a minority of Mauritians. Most of the respondents interviewed for this study did not see any problem describing Mauritian as a symbol of national identity even though it started off as the "language of the slaves" (*langaz ban esklav* – Jayen, 20-39, IMH). Indeed, responses mostly underline the inextricable link between the language and the nation, and not the link between the language and Creoles (Raymond and Father Cerveaux are the few interviewees who explicitly highlight the indexical link between Mauritian and Creoles).

The discussion in this chapter suggests that Mauritian, which started off as the language of the slaves, has come to characterise a Mauritian way of life. In the words

of Ah Vee (*L'Express* 28 October 1997: 15), Mauritian "unites the Mauritian people". Indeed, a necessary, though not sufficient, criterion for being Mauritian is to speak Mauritian. If the language belongs to the whole Mauritian nation, it naturally means that the language also belongs to the Creole community, although not exclusively. If it belongs to the Creole community only, then it means that all other ethnic or social groups on the island have no rights over the language. But this is not the case: the interviews suggest that many Mauritians strongly identify with this language. Mauritian, I believe, has two distinct roles: that of a national language and that of an ancestral one. And the two roles are not mutually exclusive (also, Virahsawmy, *Le Mauricien* 5 March 2004, *Impact News* 7 March 2004). The special historical importance of Mauritian to the Creole community should be recognised. As argued by Father Cerveaux, Creoles should not be made to feel that just like their ancestors, they are being deprived of an important element of their identity. Just like the Creole community, Mauritian society needs unifying elements that bind the population together. Both communities are still building their identity and language is a crucial element in their identity affirmation.

7.9 Summary and conclusion

This chapter shows that the concept of linguistic ownership is complex and has to be adapted to local situations. Mauritian, for instance, finds itself in a paradoxical situation. Although it is extensively used in daily interactions, its exact function is not clearly defined. On the one hand, it is an index of Mauritian identity. On the other, it is an index of Creole ethnicity. As such, it is not clear who owns the language.

By referring to the literature on linguistic ownership and my interviewees' responses, I have addressed the question of ownership of Mauritian. I have discussed this issue with respect to four criteria which I believe are important in assigning ownership of a language to a group: native language, historical link, exclusivity and emotional bond. I have highlighted some of the competing local language ideologies. I have shown that Creoles' "historical link" with Mauritian and the belief that they speak the purest forms of the language might give them special rights on the language. However, the other ethnic groups of the island can claim ownership of the language on the basis of their native knowledge of, and emotional attachment to, Mauritian.

The above discussion shows that Mauritian has two distinct indexical values: that of a national language and that of an ethnic language. For this reason, both the Creoles and the Mauritian nation can claim ownership of the language. In both situations, Mauritian fills a "linguistic gap" – in the first case, an ancestral language gap and in the second case, a national language one.

Questions of ownership have direct social implications in the Mauritian context. Chapter 5 has shown that some Mauritians want Mauritian to be promoted in the education system as an ancestral language for the Creoles while others want the language to be introduced for all Mauritians. In this chapter, we have seen that there are historical and sociocultural reasons for the Creoles to claim that Mauritian is their ancestral language. Hence, when some Creoles ask that Mauritian should be introduced in schools as an ancestral language on a par with other ancestral languages, they are not making an unreasonable claim. The issue of language-in-education could therefore benefit from discussions on ownership of Mauritian.

Furthermore, the issue of linguistic ownership could help in establishing who the norm-setters are for Mauritian. Chapters 4 and 6 show that Mauritian is still perceived as a non-standard language. The language has been standardised by two independent bodies (the Church and LPT) and a group of linguists have recently been given the responsibility of developing a standard for Mauritian. Should four linguists set the norms of the language? Or should laypeople have a say on standardisation matters? If so, who can have a say on such issues? We have seen that in the case of the English language, the British and Americans generally tend to be perceived as norm-setters. If we take the owners of Mauritian to be the whole Mauritian nation, then it could be argued that all Mauritians control and have equal say over the standardisation of the language. If we adopt the stance that the owners of Mauritian are primarily the Creoles, then it could be claimed that this group has more power over the language than any other group. The definition of the owner of Mauritian might therefore determine who has power to decide on the orthographic system and new coinages, for instance.

Finally, assigning ownership of Mauritian to the Creoles can have a positive impact on this group's self-perception and to a certain extent, could even possibly alleviate their *malaise* (section 2.8, Chapter 2). We have seen that all ethnic groups on the island can easily identify a language as theirs. However, the Creoles, culturally impoverished because of slavery, do not have an ancestral cultural language to identify with. Hence, by saying that Mauritian belongs primarily to the Creoles, we could, as Father Cerveaux argues, be boosting the self-esteem of this group. In other words, the answer to the question "who owns Mauritian?" can be used to empower a

marginalised group. Therefore, the question of linguistic ownership is part of a larger debate on social and psychological matters. This chapter has only very briefly touched on some of the social and psychological implications of the linguistic ownership question. Further research on the ownership issue is needed to shed more light on the interactions between language ideologies, social practices and psychological processes in Mauritius.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion and Further Research

8.0   Recap

The first three chapters provide the indispensable framework for understanding this research work. After giving a general description of my research aims in Chapter 1, I went on to describe in a fairly detailed manner the historical, social, economic and linguistic situation of Mauritius in Chapter 2. The second chapter is crucial to this dissertation in that it highlights the complexity of the local linguistic situation, the paradoxical position of Mauritian, the pervasiveness of ethnicity as a social category, the various language, power and identity ideologies present in Mauritian society. As such, it places the theoretical research questions (Chapter 1) within a practical and applied framework.

The sociolinguistic situation of Mauritius has also informed the choice of research methods. I used a variety of methodologies for this study – as discussed in Chapter 3. This dissertation shows how the various methodologies chosen complement each other and offer wider insights into the Mauritian situation.

The bulk of the information for this study came from interviews conducted in Mauritius. Interviewees were coded for a variety of social categories, the most salient one being ethnicity. The interview findings were supplemented by participant observation, perceptual dialect research and my native knowledge of Mauritian society. Even though the interview questionnaire (Appendix I) deals with a number

of themes relating to the situation of Mauritian, in this dissertation I focused on its position in two domains: writing and education.

Writing and education are two dynamic fields where the use of Mauritian is currently being renegotiated. Over the last ten years, Mauritian has constantly been thrown in the limelight. To date, the role of Mauritian is still not clearly defined. Although the language is promoted by a number of sociocultural organisations and individuals, it lacked state support for a long time. It is only this year (2004 – at which time I had already completed the research work for this dissertation) that the Government have shown a real desire to address the linguistic issue. Through interviews and participant observation, I was able to assess use of, and attitudes to, Mauritian in the written domain and education sector.

By referring to my fieldwork findings, I argued that the standard orthographies promoted by the Church and LPT have not gained wide acceptance among laypeople. In fact, for some Mauritians, Mauritian remains an oral language. Those who do write Mauritian adopt a number of spelling systems. We saw that although many interviewees do not use Mauritian in the written domain, they tend to support literacy in the language. Actively using the language and supporting the use and promotion of the language are two distinct phenomena.

In Chapter 4, I also showed that the choice of an orthographic system reflects linguistic and social hierarchies and consequently, is not ideologically neutral. The case of Mauritian illustrates that it is important for a language to have a standard and

for this standard to be recognised. Attached to the ideology of the standard, therefore, are ideologies of prescription and authority.

We saw that standardisation is an important theme in the discussion of attitudes to the use of Mauritian in the education sector. I showed that the (perceived) lack of standard for Mauritian is an obstacle to its promotion in the school system. There are competing ideologies regarding the introduction of Mauritian in the education system. On the one hand, it is opposed on the grounds that the language is socially and linguistically inferior. On the other, it is supported on the basis of its importance as a native language and the language of the Mauritian nation.

Chapter 5 is a further illustration of how linguistic domains can become the field for the expression of power relations and the assertion of identity. Languages are arranged in a linguistic hierarchy that mirrors local social hierarchies. Mauritian is at the lower end of the hierarchy while French is at the higher end. In a similar fashion, the Creoles, the ethnic group that Mauritian is indexed with, are at the bottom of the social hierarchy while the Franco-Mauritians, the speakers of French, are at the top. We began to see the ethnic index of Mauritian in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 6, we were able to further investigate the identity index of Mauritian using the material developed in chapters 4 and 5 and perceptual dialect findings. We saw that purity of Mauritian has an ethnic index in that it is linked to Creole ethnicity. It is interesting to note how the purest forms of Mauritian are localised in regions with high Creole populations. I pointed out that through its direct index with Creole ethnicity, the language was indirectly indexed with Christianity and low

socio-economic status. This, in turn, strengthens Mauritian's position at the bottom end of the linguistic and social hierarchy.

The discussion on purity of Mauritian also highlighted the prescriptive ideologies that we had observed in Chapter 4. I have shown how respondents have an understanding of what counts as "correct", "true" or "pure" Mauritian even though the language is generally perceived as non-standard. Prescriptivism is widespread in this corpus.

Once we had established the indexical link between Mauritian and Creole ethnicity, we were able to examine the question of ownership of the language. In Chapter 7, we drew on the material in Chapter 6 and all the previous chapters to answer the question "who owns Mauritian?" and determine whether Mauritian is an ethnic or a national language.

While some Creoles claim that Mauritian belongs to them, some non-Creoles argue that it belongs to the whole Mauritian nation, irrespective of ethnicity, social class and religion. To decide whether it is the Mauritian nation or the Creole group who owns Mauritian, we looked at some criteria of linguistic ownership. We saw that the case of Mauritian is complex and its ownership could not simply be assigned to either the Creole group or the Mauritian nation. I suggested that Mauritian has a dual function. It is the ancestral language of the Creoles and at the same time, the national language of the Mauritian. This led me to conclude that both the Mauritian nation and the Creoles as a group could claim ownership of the language – either as a national or an ancestral language.

The ethnic index of Mauritian (and its effect in influencing attitudes to the language) was emphatically brought out in chapters 6 and 7. In the previous chapters as well, I observed that respondents sometimes explicitly or implicitly used ethnicity as a framework for rationalising their language ideologies. I looked at some of the ways in which language beliefs are interrelated with ideologies of power and identity in the Mauritian context. Language is clearly an important index of ethnicity which in turn is an index of socio-economic status and political power. The various social and linguistic categories and hierarchies therefore serve to reinforce each other.

8.1 Conclusion and further research

Given the social significance of the issues dealt with in this dissertation, our findings here can have important applied implications – as mentioned at the end of some of the previous chapters. As a brief recap: our findings on the owner of Mauritian and attitudes to the language in the written domain and education sector could help inform language policies in the education sector, for instance. The research on perceptual dialectology could direct language planners to the choice of an official standard. This research could, therefore, be extended so that it has a direct practical impact on the local linguistic situation.

This research can also be extended along more methodological and theoretical lines. For instance, as mentioned in chapters 3 and 6, perceptual dialect method had never been used in Mauritius before. This dissertation could serve as a pilot study for the conduction of further perceptual dialectology research in the Mauritian context. Any

future work on perceptual dialectology could use the observations developed in this study in order to refine the methodology and adapt it to the local context.

Role-play is another method that would benefit from some further work. As I pointed out in Chapter 3, I was faced with a number of practical and linguistic obstacles when conducting role-plays in Mauritian schools. By taking these observations into consideration, we could develop a better framework for the study of Mauritian children's acquisition of language attitudes.

This research has focused on a small segment of the population in order to get an idea of some of the language ideologies prevalent in Mauritian society. Because of the small size of the corpus, we were not able to generalise all our findings. It would therefore be interesting to see to what extent the language ideologies discussed here are supported or contested by the population. To do so, we have to conduct a large-scale language survey. Such a national project would involve important financial investments and also the participation of a number of researchers.

It would also be exciting to follow the development of Mauritian as a language of written communication and education. Mauritian is clearly at an important phase of its development. It is likely that over the coming decade, the role of Mauritian would have changed significantly. As we saw in Chapter 5, the Government have promised to introduce Mauritian in the education sector in the next few years. But the development of Mauritian as the official medium of instruction or a subject is dependent upon the official recognition of a standard form for the language. We can

therefore expect some major official developments on the linguistic front in Mauritius.

An official acceptance of Mauritian is likely to have an impact on laypeople's attitudes to the language. Hence, it would be interesting to investigate the effect that the official recognition of the language has on local language ideologies. My hypothesis is that the official acceptance of Mauritian as a language of education would have a positive impact on people's language beliefs and attitudes and lead to a positive re-evaluation of the role of Mauritian in the local community. But this hypothesis remains to be proven.

In this dissertation, we looked at language attitudes especially with respect to ethnic identity. No doubt, ethnicity is a crucial category in the construction of identity in Mauritius. However, other categories like gender and age, for instance, could also have an important bearing on speakers' attitudes. It would be interesting to examine how the other social categories affect Mauritians' linguistic beliefs and behaviour.

On a more focused scale, it would be fascinating to study how the development of computer-mediated communication (CMC) affects the role of Mauritian. In Chapter 4, we saw that among the young people, Mauritian tends to be the preferred medium for some forms of CMC. It is likely that in the coming years with the rapid development in Information Technology, Mauritian will gain greater use as a CMC medium. This is bound to influence the status of, and attitudes to, the language. Further research on this topic will therefore help us understand how CMC changes the role and perceptions of Mauritian.

I have devoted a relatively small part of this dissertation to varieties of Mauritian in Chapter 6. The varieties seem to differ in a number of phonological, syntactic and morphological ways (Baker 1972 and my interviewees' comments). However, we do not have much information about the ways in which these varieties differ. Hence, it would be interesting to study the varieties spoken by the people in the nine districts and analyse in what respects their phonology, syntax, morphology and vocabulary differ. Such a study could assess the influence of ancestral languages on varieties of Mauritian spoken around the island. The findings could then give empirical support to some of the arguments put forward by my informants in Chapter 6.

Finally, over the course of the three years researching into the linguistic situation of Mauritius, I have observed some major changes in the attitudes to Mauritian. It has been challenging to keep up with the developments in the local linguistic landscape. The sociolinguistic situation of the island is bound to continue evolving at a rapid rate. I hope that this research can contribute to the ongoing debates on languages in Mauritius. I also hope that this work has shown that Mauritius is an ideal field of research for any sociolinguist who wants to work in a dynamic setting and see the national sociolinguistic profile change so quickly – and with such direct impact on society.

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[1] There are various ways of referring to the most spoken language of Mauritius. The variety is most commonly called *Creole* – as shown in the extracts throughout this dissertation. There are some people who refer to the variety as *Morisyen/Mauritian* or *Creole Morisyen/Mauritian Creole*. The term *Creole* also refers to an ethnic category in Mauritius. This ethnic category tends to be associated with the creole language (chapters 6 and 7). I prefer to use the term *Mauritian* to refer to the language and reserve the term *Creole* for the ethnic category. I use *Mauritian* because, as my respondents put it, this language is not restricted to the Creole community alone but is now used by Mauritians of all ethnicities, social classes, age-groups and religions. Using the term *Mauritian* instead of *Creole* therefore highlights the role of this variety as a national rather than an ethnic language (more on this in Chapter 7).

[2] At the demand of the Government of Mauritius, a committee, consisting of linguists from the University of Mauritius and the Mauritius Institute of Education, was set up in March 2004 to devise an official standard for Mauritian. The committee submitted their recommendations on the *grafi larmoni* (the "orthography of harmony") to the Government on the 24th September 2004. The recommendations were made available online on the 30th September 2004 at which time I had already completed this dissertation. Members of the general public have been invited to send in their suggestions and comments on *grafi larmoni* to the Ministry of Education. Given that the report has only recently been submitted to the Government, it is most unlikely that this official standard will be ready for use on the island before 2005.

[3] The "ethnic" categories used in this dissertation are those commonly used on the island or in the literature. They are not used in any evaluative or derogatory sense. It should be noted that I do not necessarily approve of those terms but use them for want of more appropriate/politically correct terms.

[4] Key: in italics are the languages associated with the respective ethnic/religious group, i.e., the ancestral language of each group.

[5] For want of an official standard for Mauritian, I use my own spelling conventions – closely resembling those used by the Church and Virahsawmy – when writing the language.

[6] Original quote: *Un des buts fut de donner un choc psychologique aux Mauriciens pour qu'ils prennent conscience du fait Morisiên en tant que langue et outil pour la construction d'une nation*

[7] According to Foley (1992), the Catholic Church is divided into two factions: the socialist group that advocates the use of Mauritian and the traditionalist one that supports the use of French. Given this state of affairs, the Mauritian translation has further social significance. The use of Mauritian in the mass and in religious literature is a way of promoting the interests and boosting the self-esteem of the Creoles, the poorest of the Mauritian Christian community: their language is seen fit for use for religious purposes (see chapter 7 for further details on the Creole community and Mauritian).

[8] The situation is changing now. The Minister of Education has announced that Mauritian will be introduced in the education sector in the next few years – chapters 2 and 5.

[9] During my fieldwork, I was struck by the number of people having and using mobile phones. Mauritians as young as 8 or 9 were seen walking around with their mobile phones. Mauritius is following the trends of Western countries where use of mobile phones is widespread.

[10] Ah Vee and Collen also advocate the use of Bhojpuri as a medium of instruction. Their argument rests on the fact that Bhojpuri is the mother-tongue of an important number of Mauritians.

[11] Original quote: [*il est*] *injuste qu'une communauté représentant plus de 30 % de la population, en l'occurrence la communauté créole, ne puisse avoir sa propre langue ancestrale et maternelle comme matière à l'école alors que les autres ont cette possibilité.*

[12] Older interviewees were describing their linguistic choices when they were at school.

[13] Given that Mauritius is an island, there are a number of coastal places. However, in his interview, Raymond refers to coastal regions which are also fishing villages.

[14] Rodrigues is a small island east of Mauritius. Seventy-five percent of the population are of African origin. In fact, "one feels like one is on African soil" (Moutou 1996: 87, my translation) there. Rodrigues is an underdeveloped country. According to the 2000 census, farming and fishing are the main occupations on the island.

[15] Percentages are calculated on the basis of language tables in the 2000 Population Census. Although census figures have to be interpreted with caution, they give us an insight into the national linguistic situation and also, language beliefs and attitudes (e.g., Stein 1986).

[16] In Mauritius, it is said that in the early 20th century, Calcuttias and Sino-Mauritians dealing with the Gujerati merchants and Afro-Mauritians working in Gujerati households acquired some competence in Gujerati. Their knowledge of Gujerati was generally restricted to the business domain or in the case of Afro-Mauritian and Calcuttia maids, to the home domain – i.e., cooking, cleaning, child-care. But these people had acquired Gujerati only through their interaction with Gujeratis. This again underlines the exclusive link between the Gujerati language and the people of Gujerati origin.

[17] The terms "language of forefathers" and "ancestral language" are used interchangeably in this dissertation. In everyday life, the term "ancestral language" (*lang ancestral*) is preferred over "language of forefathers".

[18] Through the archival records of the recently opened Nelson Mandela African Cultural Centre in Mauritius, it is now possible for Afro-Mauritians to look into their genealogy. However, those Afro-Mauritians need to have some information about their ancestors in order to make efficient use of the records.

[19] Original quote: *Il y a (…) des raisons historiques qui font que le groupe créole est plus vulnérable. [Ils sont] un groupe qui se retrouve confronté à des problèmes socio-*

économiques sérieux, beaucoup de préjugés et de stéréotypes, et une absence de repères culturels en raison de l'esclavage, qui fut un véritable (…) "génocide culturel".

[20] British English seems to be treated as one variety in which dialectal variations are ignored. Thus, young learners of English in Mauritius, for instance, are generally unaware of the existence of different dialects of English. Mauritians are taught the *English language*, i.e., *the language spoken by the people living in the United Kingdom*. The aim is to acquire this idealised variety, the English language.

[21] Original quote: *Nous ne sommes pas d'accord pour qu'on n'appelle pas cette langue le kreol. Nous voulons que cette langue soit connue comme le kreol et non pas comme la langue mauricienne. Il est dangereux et c'est une forme de génocide de vouloir rebaptiser cette langue (…) le kreol est né dans la grande souffrance et le chaos. Fallé pa gomme li.*

[22] Original quote: *Les Créoles ont une relation historique avec la langue. Mais je ne vois aucune difficulté pour que la langue soit et la langue ancestrale des Créoles et la langue nationale.*

[23] Mauritians who spend a few years abroad can have difficulty understanding some of the current expressions. Terms initially introduced for virtual chats and text messaging seem to have crossed over spoken language as well. For example, *lafaya* – have fun; *bat en drink* – have a drink.

[24] The ideal owner of Mauritian is also, therefore, the ideal Mauritian in that he/she shows maximum acculturation to the local context. Does this mean that the Creole is the ideal Mauritian? Has their "cultural nakedness" played in their favour and turned them into ideal new culture creators?

Appendix I

Questionnaire for Ph.D. Fieldwork

Part A:

Personal information:
age, sex, place of residence, ethnic and religious groups, schooling, occupation, family background.
Views about ethnicity and nationalism.

Part B:

Description Questions:

1. How would you refer to **Mauritian** (or term that respondent uses)? Possibilities:
    *   A language
    *   A dialect
    *   A broken variety of French
    *   Any other terms?

2. Do all Mauritians speak **Mauritian** in the same way?
    If no, how does the way they speak **M** differ? Possibilities:
    *   Accent
    *   Sentence structure
    *   Grammar
    *   Vocabulary
    *   Other

3. Are there distinct rural and urban varieties of **M**?

4. Who are the people who use **M** most?
    Examples of answers probed for: (old/young, male/female, ethnicity, religion)
    *   old male Afro-Mauritian
    *   old female Afro-Mauritian
    *   young male Afro-Mauritian
    *   young female Afro-Mauritian
    *   old male Indo-Mauritian Hindu
    *   old male Indo-Mauritian Muslim
    *   young male Indo-Mauritian Muslim
    *   young female Indo-Mauritian Tamil
    *   old female Franco-Mauritian
    *   young male Sino-Mauritian

5. Where is **M** most often spoken?
    Example of some of the responses that will be probed for:

- at school
- in supermarkets
- at home
- in the market
- in the bus
- in churches/ mosques/temples
- other

6. Do you use **M** at home? If yes, with whom are you most likely to use it? Possibilities:
- Parents
- (Grand-parents)
- Siblings
- Children
- Visitors
- Maids/Gardeners
- Other

7. Are any members of your family more likely to use **M** than others? Possibilities:
- Old people? If yes, when and with whom?
- Young people? If yes, when and with whom?
- Kids? If yes, when and with whom?

8. Do you think that there are Mauritians who do not USE **M** at all? If yes, who?
- Same as answers suggested in 4

9. Do you think that there are Mauritians who do not KNOW **M** at all? If yes, who?
- Same as answers suggested in 4

10. Do you use **M** for writing as well? If yes, what kind of spelling do you use (French, the one proposed by Virahsawmy or one of your own making)?

Attitude Questions:

1. Why is it that **M** is extensively used in Mauritius?

2. Can **M** be used to express abstract thoughts?

3. Did your parents speak **M** to you when you were a kid? Do you think that it was good that they spoke/ didn't speak **M** with you then?

4. Do you think that **M** should be taught at school? Why?

5. Do you speak **M** (are you likely to speak **M**) with your children?

6. Do you want your children to understand **M**?

7. Do you want your children to speak **M**?

8. Is it important for Mauritians to know **M**?

9. Which language would you say is *the* language of the Mauritians?

10. Is it advantageous to know one language in particular? Which one? Why?

11. Would you prefer if Mauritians spoke:
- English, French, M, any other ancestral language
- English, French, M
- French, M
- Mostly M
- Just M
- Other

12. Does the use of **M** suggest anything about a person's character?
- Positive: e.g., lively, interesting, trendy.
- Negative: e.g., boring, unsophisticated, lazy.
- Nothing

13. Should **M** be used everywhere in Mauritius? Where should one never use M? Why?

14. What would you think if you heard:
- A bank manager
- A politician during a speech in the Parliament
- A head teacher during a school assembly

use **M**?

15. Should **M** be used in writing as well? Is there a specific variety of M that should be standardised?

16. Would you use **M** :
- With your friends
- With a school teacher
- With a bus driver
- With a priest/imam/ pandit
- With your doctor
- To write a letter/an email to a friend
- To write a letter/an email to the bank manager
- To conduct a job interview

17. How would you feel if **M** were to become the official language of Mauritius?

18. Do you think that people use languages to mark their ethnic or religious affiliation in Mauritius?

Appendix II

Personal information

Please complete the following questionnaire. Fill in the blank spaces or circle the right answer.

Name (optional):	
Age:	<13 13-19 20-39 40-59 >59
Sex:	Male Female
Place of residence:	Urban Rural
Ethnic group:	Afro-Mauritian Coloured Population Franco-Mauritian Indo-Mauritian Sino-Mauritian Other (specify)
Religious affiliation:	Christian Hindu Muslim Marathi Tamil Telugu Other (specify)
Level of education:	Primary Secondary Tertiary
Occupation:	
Ancestral language:	

Thank you for your cooperation.

Perceptual dialect questionnaire

Multilingualism, linguistic ownership and ethnic identity: Attitudes to, and use of, Mauritian

Aaliya Rajah-Carrim
University of Edinburgh

Name:
Sex:
Age:
Place of residence (rural/urban):
Ethnic group/religion:

Would you say that all Mauritians speak Mauritian Creole in the same way?
IF "NO": Please circle on this map the districts where the <u>purest forms</u> of Creole are spoken.
Thanks for your help!

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